





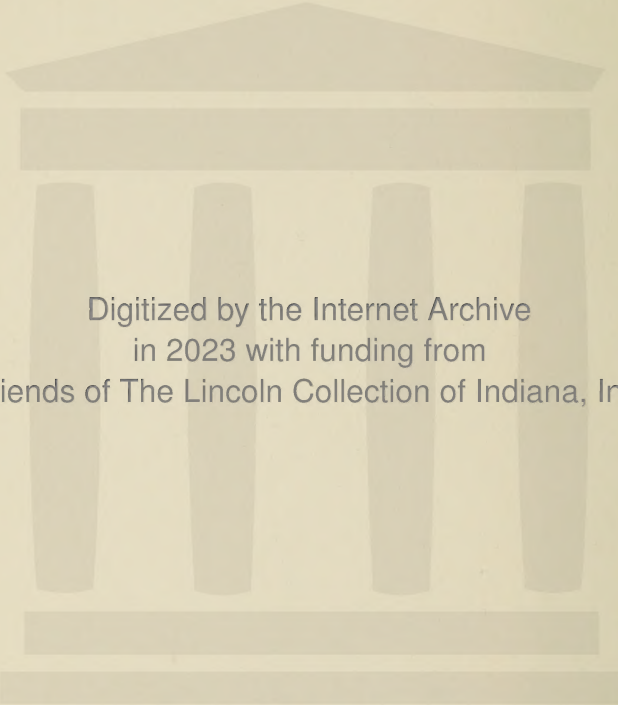
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN





# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

DEMOCRAT

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"THE CHURCH AND THE INDIVIDUAL,"  
CHRISTIANITY AND COMMERCE," ETC. ETC.

"Let us have faith that right makes might and  
in that faith let us to the end dare to do  
our duty as we understand it."

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TO  
DOROTHY  
MY WIFE



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## INTRODUCTION

SIXTY years after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as the President of the United States, England welcomed him into the Valhalla of her great statesmen. His statue was placed upon the most historic spot in English history, looking upon the walls of the ancient Abbey Church and standing over against the Hall of Westminster. He seems to have slipped quietly, almost unobserved, into that sacred place, as if by some natural right.

For that little plot of ground is the stage upon which, for a thousand years, was played the drama of individual liberty. There, shackles were broken, wrongs were righted, privileges wrung from despotic hands. Lincoln belongs to the heroic band of adventurers in the cause of freedom. He is of the succession, and no alien, in that goodly company. He too was cast for a leading part in the great drama, though the stage upon which he played was across the sea, whither Englishmen had carried the glowing passion of their race.

Yet it was a notable event when a son of the great Queen, who had watched the flames of the American Civil War from afar, unveiled St. Gaudens' statue

of its chief actor. It was as though the American people, through this gift, had pledged anew an oath of friendship and made this figure of Lincoln a symbol of their common faith. It is the approach of one nation to another through a communion of spirit. America offered the richest jewel in her treasury in giving this relic which enshrines her heart's love and reverence. It was meant to be, and must for ever remain, a sign of enduring union between the motherland and her daughter.

The name of Lincoln was not unknown in London sixty years ago nor was he wholly without honour. Slavery was as hateful then, as now, to all liberty lovers in every land, and Lincoln was their champion. But he had emerged from obscurity with a sudden leap and his great career was but just begun. During the four years of his official life every faculty of mind and body was absorbed in the prosecution of civil war. He was a man of the hour and of the place, as yet but little known even to the majority of his fellow-countrymen.

Universal fame came to him slowly ; but out of the mist of six decades his colossal figure has seemed to loom like a great ship pushing its way through the fog into the security of port ; and especially during the last few years has he come close to the tempest-tossed soul of the world. The story of his humble beginning, of his undistinguished years of preparation, of his modesty, patience and



gentleness when clothed with despotic power, has become a world epic. He seems to-day to have stepped out of the frame which circumscribed him within an historical moment and to have become one of the universal figures of mankind.

Lincoln is at once the romance and the enigma of modern history. He is the plaything of the imagination. The danger is that his simple and homely nature will be lost in clouds of sentiment. Already legend is enshadowing his fame. Yet the steps of his rise are definite and clear. He was no accident, but the natural product of democratic selection under favouring conditions. The rich, loose soil of a self-contained frontier community nourished the seeds of ambition planted within it. It chanced that in Lincoln's case the man and the opportunity met, but long before that meeting he had made himself ready for the occasion.

Great natural endowments he certainly possessed, but our interest lies in the long struggle against adverse conditions by which he was disciplined for his task. With the passing years his fame has spread throughout the world; his words have brought a light of understanding and inspiration into darkened hours; but he remains the simple, friendly figure he once appeared to his associates. St. Gaudens has pictured the man of heavy burdens and many sorrows as his victorious career was about to close. In this little book we would seek

to follow the lights and shadows of his slow progress from the deep obscurity of his youth to the shining height of democratic leadership. For it must be said of Lincoln that the full measure of his influence over the course of human history, over the minds and hearts of coming generations, will be reached only when Democracy has been touched and heightened by the same spirit which ennobled his public career. For Democracy is less an achievement than an aspiration ; and its fate lies in the hearts of the people.

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## CHAPTER I

### BOYHOOD

#### I

LIKE other public men, Abraham Lincoln was asked to write his autobiography. At the moment when he was at the height of his new fame and when he was soon to become the sixteenth President of the United States, he furnished the editor of the "Dictionary of Congress" with the following story of his life: "Born February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. Education, defective. Profession a lawyer. Have been Captain of Volunteers in the Black Hawk war. Postmaster at a very small office. Four times member of the Illinois Legislature and was a member of the Lower House of Congress."

Between these lines it is now possible to read the story of nearly fifty years of poverty, struggle and bitter disappointment; and as his figure grew larger and larger in the history of his country the details of his earlier career assumed a new and pathetic interest. After his death, six years later, his countrymen recognized in him one of those

mysterious prophets who are called out of obscurity by a secret voice to lead the people through a period of confusion and distress. Like Amos or Joan of Arc, he might have remained for ever an unknown atom in the human mass but for an inward sense of destiny we cannot understand. He said of himself at another time that the whole record of his life was contained in the line :

“The short and simple annals of the poor.”

When the painful and sordid story of his youth, of which he rarely spoke, became known, the cloud of mystery about him deepened, and he has taken his place among the sad and lonely figures in the world's history who are set apart to bear the cross for many.

Yet he came upon the earth in a goodly company and at a propitious moment. 1809 was also the birth-year of Gladstone, Tennyson and Darwin, and within the decade many others of the great Victorian leaders of thought and action, both in England and America, were born. Napoleon's star was at its zenith. Washington was but ten years dead, and the influences of the two revolutions filled the world.

It is the contrast of this brilliant and memorable moment with the utter remoteness from it of Lincoln's birthplace that stirs the imagination.

The Lincoln family were of good English stock who had come out to the colonies in the seventeenth century and one branch of which had settled in Virginia. Later generations followed the course of empire towards the western frontier and lost their contact with civilization. Lincoln's grandfather

reached the outlying territory of Kentucky and there, while making a clearing for farm land, had been killed in an Indian raid. Thomas Lincoln, Abraham's father, was then but six years old and his sole inheritance seems to have been the unsettled and wandering spirit of his ancestors. He grew into a man of great strength, lazy, shiftless and illiterate. While employed as an untrained carpenter by a man named Joseph Hanks, he married his employer's niece, Nancy, who in 1809 became the mother of Abraham Lincoln. The birthplace of the great President has disappeared, but descriptions of it survived long afterwards. It was a roughly built hut about fourteen feet square, situated upon an ugly and barren track of land. It had no other floor than the beaten earth, and the unglazed windows of a common cattle shed. Some boards propped up in a corner and covered with leaves and old quilts made a bed. There was also a rough table and a few three-legged stools. In itself this is not of great importance, for the Lincolns did not long remain in any one place, and in his eighth year the young Abraham was helping to cut a path through thick forests on the migration of the family to its third home. On this trip the family possessions were floated down the Ohio river on a raft, and we know that they consisted of a few tools, one oven and lid, one skillet and lid, some tin ware and four hundred gallons of whisky. The raft had the misfortune to capsize in the rapids, and after a vexatious effort the provident father rescued a few tools, some of his household utensils, and all of the whisky.



Thomas Lincoln's ambition never soared above the one-roomed shanty, though when the family increased a sort of garret was added to enlarge the sleeping accommodation. The table was easily supplied, for in the forests game was usually plentiful and the cultivation of a little patch of ground furnished the family with the inevitable coarse bread.

Lincoln's career, in that he rose from poverty to eminence, is by no means peculiar, but it would be quite impossible to understand his mystifying nature without taking into account the revolt of his soul against the sodden barrenness of his youth. Romances have thrilled the imagination of young boys with tales of primitive life upon the frontiers, with its adventures and delights; but its harsh realities left deep scars on more than one generation of American citizens. In such a household as the Lincolns there could be neither decency nor order. It existed without joy in the present or hope in the future. Days of deadening toil were followed by nights of vulgar pleasure. The scattered clearings, often shut in by dense woods, gave little opportunity for social contact. Schools and libraries and churches—and all cultural institutions which follow the march of civilization—did not exist in those remote places. There were few books and no newspapers, for even among those who knew how to read there could be but little interest in the great, far-away world. Nancy Hanks was looked upon, at the time of her marriage, as a superior girl, for she could both read and write as well as solve simple problems in arithmetic. She taught her husband to



sign his name and gave to her son the first lessons which started him upon his long intellectual quest.

Throughout his life, even in its most relaxed or crowded hours, Lincoln moved in the atmosphere of an immense solitude, as though he had never escaped from the loneliness of the primeval forests, or from the horrors of his early days. We must remember that when we see him in high place and exercising great power among his favoured contemporaries.

When he was eight years old an epidemic swept through those river settlements and Lincoln's mother was lost to him. In the end, however, it proved to be not all loss, for a year or two later his father prevailed upon an earlier love, who had become a widow, to accept his hand and fortune. This event brought great changes into the Lincoln household, for this lady possessed a handsome chest of drawers, a table and chairs as well as several cooking utensils. She compelled her new husband to lay a board floor in the little cabin and she brought some sort of seemliness into the domestic life. Her own children were somehow provided for in that small compass and became the earliest companions of Abraham's boyhood. She took the awkward young lad to her heart at once, encouraged him in his ambition for knowledge and provided for him as best she could out of her scanty store. She lived long enough to bewail her boy's election to the presidency of the United States and to sorrow over the tragic death she had foretold. This tender and sympathetic relationship between the boy and his stepmother is the one touch of light in that picture of

gloom. It is to her he evidently refers when speaking of his great indebtedness to his mother. She was the only person in that family circle for whom he seemed to have any affection, and their intimacy remained unbroken until the end.

After Lincoln's tragic death his early associates began to recall their boyhood recollections, and we have preserved for us in this manner a tolerably clear picture of him in his teens. By this time the near-by settlement of Gentry had become a hamlet and boasted of a village school which, for a few weeks in winter, was attended by the boys and girls of the countryside. The crowning glory of this school was a class of training in deportment, by which these children of backwoodsmen acted the parts which were supposed to be played by fashionable people in the East. Lincoln enjoyed the privilege of this school for a short term. He was far advanced in the class work, which never went beyond the three "Rs" (reading, 'riting and 'rithmatic) but it is hard to picture him excelling in the matter of deportment. At this time he had attained nearly his full height of six feet four inches, his feet and hands were of enormous size, his figure thin and ungainly, his face already seamed and swarthy. Legend has always dwelt upon his prodigious strength. He was painfully uncouth and awkward, grotesquely clothed in deerskin, which left exposed long reaches of his bony shins and wrists, and his great head was quaintly capped with a bit of coon skin. All his boyhood friends dwelt upon this odd appearance and of his consciousness that he was unlike other boys. But they also speak

much of his exceeding kindness and gentleness ; of his delight in helping others and of his tender care for all beings in distress. He hated the prevailing cruelty to animals and could never be induced to shoot any living thing. He could be stirred to fierce rage by any form of injustice or premeditated wrong, but he is remembered by his abounding good nature and by his quixotic honesty. Even then he was affectionately called " Honest Abe," and that endearing term clung to him through life.

All these outward circumstances have interest only as they are related to his after career. The wonderment of that career is that when suddenly and unexpectedly called out of semi-obscurity to a great and responsible office he seemed to enter it fully equipped for its exacting duties. The distinguished politicians whom he made his associates in the administration of the government soon discovered that they were dominated by a gentle but firm leader. European statesmen gradually became aware that American affairs were being conducted by a master mind. The United States had few friends across the sea in those terrible days of civil war, and only a most bold and skilful pilot could have guided the Ship of State through the dangerous passages and have escaped the threatening storm of international politics. History tells of many men who, in times of unrest, have seized the reins of power and for a brief period led the popular will. But Lincoln was no accident. He held his place by a law of selection. The qualities of mind and soul which stand the test of time—

which rise from a martyr's grave to renew their inspiring influence after more than half a century—are the fruits of long labour, discipline and training.

#### EARLY TRAINING

We must follow the first steps of Lincoln's intellectual development if we are at all to understand those peculiar traits which distinguished him among his fellows. It was from his own mother that he received his first lessons and, although the fragments of his schooling days altogether did not compass the space of a single year, he was superior to many backwoodsmen in his ability to read and write. Legend tells of long nights spent before the open fire laboriously spelling out the words of his few books and doing simple sums upon the back of a wooden shovel with bits of charcoal. These books are known to have been the Bible, "Æsop's Fables," "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Robinson Crusoe." Upon such food was his first intellectual hunger fed.

Before he had acted the buffoon in the deportment class at the village school this detached and lonely boy had dwelt in the high society of these writers. It is not easy to reproduce the scene in its right proportions. The imagination would see in Lincoln a frontier Chatterton; and that he certainly was not. His susceptible and acquisitive young mind seized upon the only material at hand, which chanced to be immortal. As it had no distraction it burrowed deep into this material for the pure joy of it. These were the only textbooks Lincoln, as a young lad, knew; and when other little boys were committing to memory Latin conjugations he was doing the

same with the poetry of Isaiah. He was never a prig, but he was ambitious for knowledge and gained it where he could. Thus he absorbed ideas, formed his style of expression and created his mental images from pure sources. His mind was molten liquid and was poured into forms as fixed as those of a Jesuit student. It meant that his whole mental outlook was determined at the beginning not by the current opinion of his little community but by the universal standards of the literature of all ages. He was but a little boy, and it is not likely that at the moment these books meant more to him than so many printed pages which could be copied and committed to memory. But, because of his intense ambition to learn, he so inwardly digested them that they became incorporated into his being. The severer studies of his later days and the drab monotony of his professional career never effaced this first impression upon his mind. His thought was cast into the form of imagery and parable, and in his highest flights of eloquence his sentences flowed in rhythmic cadences.

The question of Lincoln's relation to the Bible is an interesting one. He never became what was then called "a professing Christian," but all followers of his career have recognized the unusual familiarity of his mind with the scriptural writings ; and there was something in his treatment of public questions that constantly recalled the great Hebrew prophets. It was the way in which he reduced the most complicated problems of Statecraft to fundamental principles of right and wrong. He seemed to possess an intuitive knowledge, a knowledge perhaps only



half realized, of a law outside himself by which his public policy must be guided and to which his private conduct must conform. He acted upon this principle as a matter of practical policy, and when we read the messages of the Hebrew statesmen we find the same conviction that the path of honour and the path of glory were identical. They taught that "righteousness exalteth a nation," and that compromising with right leads inevitably to national disaster. In the true sense they were politicians, but their diplomacy was not the practice of deception and intrigue; it was a clear proposition of the results of obedience or disobedience to the Divine Will.

To-day all the world believes that Lincoln was a great and wise statesman. He suffers nothing from comparison with his contemporaries, yet he spoke an unfamiliar language. He saw clearly the economic advantage—almost necessity—of slavery in the Cotton States. He recognized and frankly proclaimed its Constitutional standing, but his one bitter cry was: "Slavery is a violation of eternal right."

Of course, the little boy who was learning to read and write out of the Bible was quite unconscious of all this, nevertheless it was making the substance of his mind. It was the framework upon which in after years he built his philosophy of society and government. When the great hour struck for England—when, with a magnificent gesture, she dared to champion the right and to oppose the wrong—the one statesman of the nineteenth century who lived again and spoke



words of inspiration and comfort to the stricken people was this stranger who, in a like hour for his country, had staked his all upon the everlasting principle of right dealing between men and nations.

## II

It is clear that these first lessons of Lincoln's childhood did really lay the foundations upon which his later self-development was built. A happy chance brought him into contact with a few immortal books, which indeed he could not understand, but which stamped themselves upon his impressionable mind. A few years later he came upon another book, of quite different quality, which also played a large part in his self-education. This book was a jumble of myths and history concerning the life of George Washington. It was written, printed and hawked about by a wandering English clergyman who called himself Parson Weems. It was a story of the great national hero who began life by cutting down a cherry tree but could not tell a lie, and whose whole career was a series of romantic adventures. Probably this poor volume gave to the young Lincoln the first glimpse he had had as yet of his country as a whole. Intercourse between frontier communities and the settled districts of the East was so slight that the feeling of national unity was practically lost; and certainly in the Lincoln family the word patriotism was unknown. But it is easy to imagine the emotions which were aroused in the boy's heart when he read the thrilling story of a nation's birth. The loose, coarse drawing of

the picture only made it the more impressive to his wondering eyes. He was at the age of hero-worship, the age when, in the great civilizations of the past, youth was dedicated to the service of the State with impressive ritual. We know that to him this was the moment of moral awakening, the moment when he asked himself—as millions of lads have done in all times—the most important of all questions: “Why had these fathers of the country paid so terrible a price, in suffering and sacrifice, for something which brought no personal gain to them; and what responsibility have I for the carrying out of their work?” At this time (about 1825) Republican government was still an experiment. Not a generation had passed since Washington was elected the first President of the United States and the reaction from the French Revolution was at its height throughout Europe. There was much talk about human rights and personal liberty, but few persons in the America of that day had any conception of a steadfast national policy or of a splendid national destiny for their new State. Nor, of course, had Lincoln in those early days, but seed was planted then which, twenty-five years later, bore abundant fruit. The answer to his question came after much toil and study, but the vision appeared at last. He saw his country in the future as something more than a vast continent—strong, rich and free. He saw the beginning of a new epoch in human history—the age of the self-governing man. In one of his speeches on the way to Washington to assume the office of President he muses over the past, calling up, perhaps, the thoughts and sentiments of

his boyhood. "I have often enquired of myself," he says, "what great principle or idea it was that kept this confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world, for all future time." To that high end he thought his country was dedicated. So simple and uncritical was his patriotism that we are led to believe he never wholly outgrew his first enthusiasm. He became a master of words and his mind was severely trained in logic, yet, in the most memorable utterance that ever fell from his lips he declared that "America was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are born free and equal." Perhaps it is this generous youthful acceptance of a great and illogical sentiment that still endears his name to mankind.

## III

So far as we have followed the process of Lincoln's early preparation for his great career we have seen certain broad outlines of an intense moral conviction which was, in part, the unconscious result of his early ambition for knowledge, and an intimate personal association which grew more and more conscious, with the nobler spirit of his country. Yet we must go a step or two further if we are to understand how this obscure and ungainly western lawyer became the most powerful democratic ruler in modern history. For while any chance hand may

hold a sceptre, only the trained and masterful hand can wield it ; and, as for Lincoln, the meagreness of his opportunity stands out always in sharp contrast with the perfect finish of his training for high office. Others of his generation—Disraeli, Gladstone, Mazzini, Cavour, and all that memorable group of intellectuals who were the glory of the nineteenth century—were also being trained for their life work in the universities and the capitals of Europe ; but this boy was sent to a school of experience where the harsh lessons of daily life were flogged into his very soul by a ruthless taskmaster. With all his eager passion for book-learning, some of the most useful lessons of his life were learned by intimate contact with his associates.

The family fortunes in no way improved, but the flow of immigration had reached, and stopped for a time, in the near by village of Gentry. For young Lincoln that meant a larger world ; not only more neighbours from whom he could borrow books but more companions of his own age and station. In these primitive communities the common meeting place for all the country side was the cross-road store. It was a miniature emporium or exchange where all the necessities of life were bought and sold. But it was also the forum to which flocked all the wits and wise men of the neighbourhood. It was a congress of shrewd, untutored, independent citizens, whose minds were abashed by no problem of society or State. There were no formalities in those eager debates ; no squeamishness in the contest of ideas. There was, on the contrary, a shameless exposure of human nature ; a simplicity and directness of

expression which laid bare the true mind. These stores provided the first schooling in debate and Statescraft for many an American political leader in those early days. It was so with Lincoln. During the next ten years he was a frequent attendant at one or another of such local senates. His was the most eager voice in debate and the merriest in jest, the quickest in repartee. His stories made him famous then, as afterwards, and his kindly humour softened all asperities.

All this while he was unconsciously probing into the secrets of the nature of man. Years later, when with his own unaided wits he had to deal with the cleverest politicians of his time it was observed that he possessed an uncanny gift of divination. He seemed to penetrate into their inner minds and to follow every tortuous path, every dark way, upon which they moved towards their goal. He read the secrets of their hearts and plumbed their hidden motives. In one famous instance he exposed to a distinguished member of his cabinet the intrigues and plots which were forming in his mind before he was fully aware of them himself, and later, rightly divining the man's true worth, appointed him the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. This sensitive plate, which seems to record the most delicate thought vibrations—this impressionability to air currents and suggestion—has lately been called the "sixth sense." It is a special endowment of the few and is developed by intimate and sympathetic association with one's fellow-men. Lincoln had certainly looked into gruesome depths of human nature and



understood "man's thoughts afar off," but the freshness of his faith in his fellow-man was never sullied.

## IV

His long schooling in the cross-road store taught him yet another lesson which served him well in later days. It was the quality of self-reliance. Like all his early lessons this gift came to him indirectly. The young frontiersmen who gathered on summer evenings about the store chose their leaders, as all healthy young men do, by the Homeric standard of fearlessness and strength. Lincoln's abnormal physical power has become legendary, but he won his way to leadership through many a hard contest. His kindly and humorous nature abhorred quarrels, and with all his ambition he was singularly lacking in the spirit of aggressiveness. Yet he rejoiced in combat. Throughout his life he loved to measure his body and mind with the strongest opponents. Although painfully modest in his estimate of himself he was undaunted by difficulties and unawed by great reputations. As President of the United States he looked over the world's statesmen with the same whimsical interest he had felt for his contestants at the village store; they were constantly reminding him of his early western friends.

We shall see what this early training meant to him when we follow him into the terrible struggles of his official life. There were times when he stood utterly alone—when treachery among his advisers, faint-heartedness throughout the nation, selfish ambition among the statesmen, jealousy among his



generals, combined to overthrow him and the cause for which he stood. Against all these mighty forces he wrestled alone, as Jacob wrestled with the angel. In the end he won, "but his thigh was withered," as Jacob's was. He came out of the struggle wearied, sad and broken, his gigantic frame bowed and his face furrowed with deep lines of suffering. Never in all his life had he feared a foe or shrunk from combat; but the final test, in those long tragic months, strained to the utmost every power of body and soul.

For this supreme task he had passed through long and severe discipline, and in his boyhood had laid the foundations upon which his whole career was built. The story of his impoverished youth is not a pleasing one. It is lacking in colour, romance and adventure. To him it brought only painful memories. The one interest in all that drab record is that, like a young seed plant, his essential spirit was pushing its way through obstacles and darkness upwards into the light. Unconsciously he was taking impressions and forming convictions which guided him throughout his life. Nor can his place in history be understood apart from these first lessons, for as a statesman he stands before men as one who built his career upon an unwavering faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness in all human affairs; as a leader whose personal ambition was caught up into a very high idea of his country's place and destiny among the nations of the world; as a man endowed with a peculiarly deep and sympathetic understanding of his fellow men; and as a firm and patient administrator who had long

exercised the great quality of self-dependence. To-day he is the outstanding figure in the history of Democracy, but he came to that place over a toilsome road. In his simple philosophy he believed that democratic government meant equal rights and privileges for all men and he was the champion of an enslaved race. But in his own lot he was content to fulfil the duties and bear the responsibilities of a free citizen. He was "poor, yet making many rich."

## CHAPTER II

### YOUTH

I N studying the influence of Lincoln's early struggles for knowledge upon his later career we have gone far beyond his actual attainments. He did indeed lay, all unknowingly, the foundation upon which the structure of that career was built, but the arduous and patient labour of building, stone upon stone, was the task of a lifetime. At eighteen he had the frame and strength of a young giant as well as mental gifts which made him a marked man in his community. But at heart he was little more than a roystering, forward and rather pert boy. The settlement of Gentry, about a mile from his father's cabin, had grown into a little village which supported a blacksmith and grocery dealer, as well as the cross-road store. There was a Court House only fifteen miles distant to which Lincoln often walked, and occasional "preachings," by travelling missionaries. Newspapers from the outside world began to filter in and neighbours sometimes possessed books upon which Lincoln laid greedy hands. The "preachings" were notable events, and people came to them from many miles about—making of them in summer an all-day and all-night picnic. In winter they were often held in private

houses and the worshippers were regaled with refreshments, consisting of whisky, raw turnips, peeled raw potatoes and apples when they were plentiful. The preacher was earnest in his work and prepared for strenuous exertion by removing his coat and loosening his collar. Lincoln, like many young boys, had a great love for this form of elocution, and wherever he could gather an audience practised it with much energy and pathos.

Certain kinds of work, in these sparsely settled districts, could be turned into jollifications where much whisky was drunk and coarse pleasures enjoyed. Whenever a new-comer arrived all the neighbourhood came together for the house-raising and made of it a rollicking occasion. After the harvest was gathered, corn-shucking parties, followed by country dances, brought the people together. In the early spring log-rolling furnished an excuse for other gatherings; and the rare weddings were events of boisterous delight. Lincoln was now fairly launched in the social stream, nor was he content to be an unobserved chip upon the surface. It is true that in the circumstances of his lot he was little different from the black slaves of the south, for his father used him or hired him out to neighbours as a common farm labourer and provided in return for his barest sustenance. He was not sufficiently nourished and was grotesquely clothed, but the boy was fully conscious of his powers and well able to hold his own in that community. In all rustic sports he was the leader, and in his own speciality of wrestling he was invincible. He was the wittiest, the readiest, the most audacious

companion. But it was his pen that was most to be feared in these days of his ribald youth. With that weapon he was matchless. No one was safe from his satires and lampoons, and every slight he received was followed by merciless revenge. His caricatures, written in prose and verse, passed from hand to hand and were not always edifying reading. Two families were his especial marks—one his employer from time to time, whose nose was unfortunate in hue and shape and who had acted ungenerously towards Lincoln regarding a borrowed book; the other a family who had slighted his mother. These were constant victims of the lad's ruthless witticisms, which occasioned not a little bitterness at the moment. At about this time, also, Lincoln came in contact with Tom Paine's "The Age of Reason," Voltaire's works and other books which were born out of the French Revolution, and doubtless he posed as a superior thinker among the simple and believing people. His companions have left us a rather disagreeable picture of the Lincoln of that period; and yet all have borne witness to some indefinable power and charm of character. They spoke as though they liked to see their god walking in the garden in the cool of the day, because it made him like unto themselves, but all the while they paid homage to his divinity. They were never willing frankly to admit that "Old Abe" was different from themselves though they readily acknowledged his unusual gifts and his freedom from coarse vices. To one enquiry as to how Lincoln could have known so much at this time Denis Hanks replied: "We learned by sight,



scent and hearing," but he added : " Lincoln was lazy, a very lazy man. He was always reading, scribbling, writing, ciphering, writing poetry and the like." The records make it clear that Lincoln had already begun to live the dual life which in some respects makes his whole career a tragedy. His ambition was to excel and dominate, not in some ideal world but in the world in which he lived. He sought to do just what others did, but to do it better. He was equipped both in body and mind to lead in that little community and he did lead. The difference between him and the others, which some of them would never acknowledge, was that even then he was planning far ahead and preparing himself for greater things. His day did not end in toil and merriment, but, after others were long asleep, he was absorbed in his books. He had made an intimate friend of the blacksmith, whose famous stories were often repeated by Lincoln long afterwards, and on condition of his keeping the forge alight he was permitted to shut himself up there and study by the fire. We shall see later how this habit of secret intellectual discipline grew upon him, how far away it carried him from the standards of his youth, and how it deepened the growing melancholy of his nature.

Meanwhile the productive capacity of the region had increased with the growth in population and it was now beginning to develop a small trade beyond its borders. As there were no fit roads for carriage the method employed was to load their goods upon a large flat-bottomed boat, little more than a raft, and float down the river to the city of

New Orleans. It was an undertaking which required strength and skill and at the end some ingenuity in bartering.

Lincoln, at this period, had two such novel experiences through which he gained his first knowledge of the outside world. We have no record of what impression the gay city of New Orleans made upon the young rustic except for one incident. On the second trip he had been present with his two companions at an auction of slaves. For the first time he saw slavery in its most terrible aspects. New Orleans was the great slave market of the south and the dread of all negroes. Lincoln saw with his own eyes human beings chained and scourged and families torn apart. He saw a young mulatto girl exposed naked before the buyers and handled by them as though she were an animal. The auctioneer invited the bidders to examine her as she was walked up and down, to prod her and assure themselves of the soundness of the article offered for sale. The incident was related by John Hanks, one of the companions, many years later. He said that Lincoln suffered in silence, but that it deepened his already intense hatred of slavery. At another time he declared that Lincoln burst out: "My God, boys, let's get away from this. If ever I get a chance to hit that thing I'll hit it hard." Whether these words were actually spoken, or were the after prophecy of an admiring friend, the effect of this incident upon Lincoln's thought and feeling throughout all his subsequent career can be easily traced. The beautiful group statue of Lincoln in the city of Boston represents him as having broken the



shackles from the limbs of the slaves who crouch at his feet. His great aim as a statesman was to preserve the integrity of his country and to restore her high tradition ; but his destiny is to be known in all future time as the " Great Liberator."

The three friends started homeward through the wilderness on foot ; but Lincoln's boyhood life was over. In 1830, one year before this memorable journey, old Tom Lincoln had had another vision of an easy life in a more remote country and had migrated with all his family and chattels into the state of Illinois. His son had driven the ox-cart which contained their possessions on the fifteen days' journey ; he had helped to build the new cabin and to split the rails which enclosed the ground he had already cleared. Then, being now of age and free, he departed to seek his own fortune. He left his home without regret, except for his kindly stepmother, but he did not go far away. Odd jobs could be found by a strong man, and until he was engaged to go to New Orleans, at the unexpected salary of eight dollars less than two guineas a month, he made a scanty living as a " general chore man."

The financial success of this trip encouraged his employer, a Mr. Offutt, to offer him a clerkship in a store he was about to establish in the village of New Salem. This place was what was known in the west as a " mushroom town," because it had sprung up almost in the night. It was situated on a high bluff overhanging the Sagamore river, and at this time of its prosperity consisted of twenty houses and some hundred persons. Offutt had a grandiose plan of building a mill on the river bank and supplying

the wants of a growing population from his store in the hamlet above. It came to nothing, for people and place soon disappeared ; but it did start the young Lincoln on a new line. He arrived before the store and supported himself in the usual way ; but at the beginning he made a very important acquaintance. The schoolmaster of the place, officiating at an election, hearing that Lincoln could read and write, employed him as a clerk for the occasion. The young man, now twenty-two, leaped to the opportunity of making himself known and uncovered all his guns as a story teller, attaining thereby a popular position in the neighbourhood. To the schoolmaster he explained his ambition to acquire accurate knowledge and received from him the loan of a copy of " Kirkham's Grammar." The importance of this slight incident is that it changed the direction of Lincoln's intellectual activities. Hitherto he had been a voracious and miscellaneous reader ; he had committed to memory many stray passages in the literature he had met with ; he had loved to declaim them, to orate, and generally to be distinguished among his fellows for intellectual brilliancy. He now took up the hard and dreary task of acquiring the foundations of knowledge. He pored over this grammar until he had mastered it ; then turned to mathematics and followed the study through from arithmetic to Euclid. He studied logic and later turned his attention to the dry beginnings of law. Long before he was of this age his contemporary, Mazzini, was familiar with the literature of most foreign languages and had written a notable study of Dante. One does not like to

think of all that Gladstone was doing at the age of twenty-two ; but at the same time, this obscure boy, who was to match the most distinguished of his generation in world-influence, was toiling hard over the bare rudiments of education. His methods of study were peculiar to himself. His legs were so long in proportion to his body that they were always in the way. At night or when no customers were present he stretched at full length on the counter of the store and, with his head propped on a roll of cloth, was entirely lost to the world. In summer his favourite position was to lie flat on his back at the foot of a tree with his legs extended upward along the trunk. Once when found in such a position an interrupter appeared and afterwards chronicled the conversation : “ ‘ What are you reading,’ I said. ‘ I’m not reading. I’m studying,’ says he. ‘ What are you studying ? ’ says I. ‘ Law,’ says he, as proud as Cicero. ‘ Great God Almighty,’ said I.”

The other important event of this first year in New Salem was Lincoln’s famous encounter with a young ruffian named Jack Armstrong. This story fills many pages in one of the earliest of the Lincoln biographies and has evidently grown into a sort of Homeric legend of mighty prowess. Armstrong was the leader of a “ gang ” which terrorized that region and which took especial pleasure in wrecking the New Salem store when the proprietor was not to their liking. It practised the usual mob violence of the border-land against individuals, but Jack appears as a giant with a magnanimous soul. Offutt, perhaps with a double motive, conceived the idea of a match between his favourite and the

dangerous leader. He carried out the negotiations with a good deal of offensive bragging, but Lincoln was obliged to accept the challenge. He now met a man worthy of his strength and skill. The wrestling went on for a long time, and as neither could gain a fall Lincoln begged his antagonist to quit and be friends. To this Armstrong replied with an insult and Lincoln, losing his temper, seized him by the throat with one hand and lifting him from the ground held him at arm's length, a beaten man. Such a feat could not but raise the champion into a place of leadership and Armstrong became his devoted friend. The story has a pleasant ending. Hannah Armstrong, Jack's wife, took a great liking to the homeless young man and opened her heart and house to him, caring for his needs as if he were one of the family. Years afterwards the chance for repayment came. Their son was accused, as it was proved wrongly accused, of murder, and Lincoln dropping all else rushed to the rescue. He was a master pleader before juries and his heart was in this case. He gained an acquittal and had the satisfaction of restoring the boy to his parents.

One result of this encounter was that it gave Lincoln his only experience in actual soldiering. One of the periodic Indian wars had broken out, known in American history as the Black Hawk War. Black Hawk was a romantic figure in Indian legend. His tribe had been given a reservation far west of the Mississippi River when the immigration of whites had encroached upon his land in Illinois. But in his old age the home instinct had driven him to break the treaty and make war upon the invaders. The



governor of Illinois called for volunteers, and Lincoln was unanimously elected captain of the company raised in his district. It is true that he saw no fighting and achieved no distinction unless the saving of a friendly Indian from the fury of his own followers can be called such. But it was a tribute to his popularity, which he highly prized, and furnished him material for raillery in one of his few speeches when member of the National House of Representatives.

During all this time his affairs were in very low water. Offutt's venture in the store had not prospered, and Lincoln again descended to the level of a day labourer. However, his ambition to become a shopkeeper was unexpectedly gratified when an opportunity presented itself for him and a partner named Berry to buy out the stock and goodwill of a firm about to leave the business. In this transaction no money passed, for a very evident reason. It was a matter of honour, and on the basis of future payment the partnership of Lincoln and Berry began its short and inglorious career. Lincoln was now absorbed in study and scouring the neighbourhood for new books. Berry was equally absorbed in drinking up the stock of alcoholic liquor. Naturally the business did not prosper and the new firm soon disposed of its rights and goods to another aspirant. This deal was also made upon a credit basis, but the purchaser soon failed and disappeared into the unknown, while Berry died of over drink. Lincoln was thus left with the whole burden of the indebtedness. Under the circumstances he could properly have been discharged through the Bank-

ruptcy Court, but he chose to carry the debt through fifteen years of struggle and self-denial until he had succeeded in paying off the last penny.

But in spite of this catastrophe and the general scattering of his activities there was now beginning to appear a definite drift in Lincoln's life. At the moment it was a very sluggish current, but its direction was becoming evident. At first there was a return to the precarious livelihood of a casual labourer, and then a happy chance gave him employment as an assistant surveyor, as Washington had been before him. In that new, uncharted country there was much demand for such work, and Lincoln is said to have done it with perfect accuracy. For a time he also held the office of postmaster, to which he refers in his autobiographical sketch. He used to say that it was so small that he "carried the office round in his hat." As his wants were few and easily supplied he was able to give his mind more seriously than ever before to the pursuit of a single aim. His ambition to become a shopkeeper was dead and his intention of learning the blacksmith's trade rejected. There was left for him the study of law. It was not a new purpose, for long before he had happened upon an old volume of Indiana Law Reports, which would have been dry reading for any one else, but which Lincoln is said to have committed to memory. Later he was able to borrow a copy of Blackstone, which he studied with that intense concentration that characterized all his mental activity. This unusual knowledge was found to be useful to his neighbours and, as a layman, he had practised in petty cases before the local courts.



The determination to follow law as a profession was strengthened by the fact that he was becoming somewhat of a political figure in his district. Every true westerner of that time loved a military title and was usually able to acquire one. Lincoln earned his—in a brief and inglorious campaign, indeed—and when he led his company home he was, in the public eye, ripe for political office. He was therefore nominated as a candidate for the Illinois Legislature. Fortunately he failed at the polls, but someone thought fit to preserve for posterity his first political speech, and no biography would be complete without it—placed in contrast, as it must be, with his second inaugural address in 1865. He said to the electors of New Salem: “Fellow citizens, I suppose you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by many friends to become a candidate for the Legislature. My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman’s dance. I am in favour of a national bank. I am in favour of the internal improvement system and a high protective tariff. These are my sentiments and political principles. If elected I shall be thankful; if not it will be all the same.” The interesting feature of this youthful address was that it was a defiant declaration of Whig principles in a district that was almost wholly Democratic, as though in England a young Radical flung out as a challenge his extremist views in a strong Tory constituency.

Nevertheless, Lincoln received an almost unanimous endorsement in his own vicinity, but was defeated for the only time during his long public

career in a popular election. In 1834, being then twenty-five years old, he carried the election, and for the next eight years was learning the art by which he became at last one of the most skilful politicians of his time. While thus engaged in earning his scanty bed and board, while attending the short sessions of the Legislature, the main business of his life was really serious study for his chosen profession; and so it came about that in 1837 he packed the accumulations of twenty-eight years of intermittent effort into the saddle-bag of a borrowed horse and set out for the new State capital of Springfield to become the junior partner of a well-known attorney.

There in that little western town, as yet hardly more than an unkempt village, we must leave him for a moment while we review the stage upon which he was to play so large a part.

Yet as we look back upon this awkward, uncouth backwoodsman turning his face so eagerly and so bravely towards the unknown world something like pity is stirred within our hearts. He was even then a man of mystery, and the atmosphere of an immense loneliness hung about his young figure. The details of his life are clear enough and have been recorded many times, but they do not explain him. His nature was as open as one of his western plains, when sunshine and shadow play upon it, but his real life was hidden from any human eye. He had the simple joyousness of a happy child and the disease of a profound melancholy, which, at no distant period, brought him near to self-inflicted death. He was the most indolent of men and the

most sociable, yet already he had worked savagely at his self-appointed task through long and lonely hours of the night. He was transparently honest, possessing that deeper quality of soul called integrity—or wholeness—but few men suspected the absorbing interests of his mind. To the very end his manner was elusive and his speech often flippant while he toiled and struggled and suffered with a bursting heart. He was painfully aware of great gaps in his education and social training, yet he possessed the ease and assurance of conscious power. Ambition, and the passion for mastering obstacles in his path, were the key-notes of his nature, yet twice within a few years he surrendered the dearest hopes of his career for what he conceived to be a greater good. Like all men of distinguished natures he drew upon immense reserves in time of need ; he was ever adding to and drawing from an accumulated stock of knowledge and experience, but never exhausting it.

This was at once his secret and his strength. He revealed much, but to men who lived in the moment and for the occasion, the unspoken resources of his nature surrounded him with an atmosphere of mystery.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SETTING OF THE STAGE

I N any general outlook over American history the names of Washington and Lincoln are always linked together. It is truly said that the one created and the other preserved a nation. With equal truth it might be said that the one was the source and inspiration of the other's political principles. Every reader of Lincoln's speeches is aware of his personal devotion to those whom he calls the "Fathers," and especially to him who was greatest among them. His mind dwelt in the period of his country's birth, much in the same imaginative way that the young Macaulay lived in the ancient city of London, reproducing the scenes and personages within a glowing fancy. He had to know what manner of men these early fathers really were, how they felt and thought about the great events in which they were the chief actors. In this sense Lincoln had the true historical instinct, even though its roots reached no deeper than the very recent and limited soil of the American struggle for independence. Nor is it likely that he saw that event with an unbiased eye, but he did penetrate into the finer spirit of those great leaders and gain from them a consuming love for his country. The

critical historian of to-day might not share all of Lincoln's enthusiasm, but our concern is with the impression made by the story of his country's heroic beginnings upon his uncritical mind. It is necessary to make a slight sketch of the causes which were at work to destroy the national union, as he saw them, and which brought about the great crisis of the Civil War.

When, in 1782, at the close of a heart-breaking struggle of seven years, the young country—now freed not only from tyranny but from protection—began to take account of its resources it was found to be in a most perilous situation. By the country is meant the thirteen original colonies, now become independent and sovereign States, which followed the Atlantic coast from the northern boundary of Maine to the northern boundary of Florida and reached westward to the Alleghany Mountains. These colonies fell naturally into three groups. The northern, or New England, group, had been settled in the early seventeenth century by a band of liberty-loving, masterful, and adventurous Non-conformists who had left the comfort of their English homes to create a new kind of Empire. The spirit which prompted the Pilgrim Fathers to set out on so great and uncertain a venture has never wholly died away. It is the spirit that builds great cities, that plunges into the earth and sweeps the seas for treasure, that harnesses the waterfall and the lightning to turn a million wheels of industry, that nourishes institutions of religion and learning and sends the shoots of its civilization into every new land. This is the spirit that subdues



the earth and moulds a race of proud, independent and often churlish men, whose main preoccupation in the affairs of this world does not deter them from seeking, through the forms of a harsh and unlovely religious faith, the blessedness of a heavenly state. The first impress of the English Pilgrims has been partially obliterated by successive floods of immigration, but the type persists, even in the prosperous and crowded New England of to-day. It is the land of small farms, of huge industrial centres, of ancient seats of learning and of far-flung commercial activities. The wit who said that " Boston is not so much a place as a state of mind " uttered something more than a half-truth, for the practical idealism of the fathers is still a living force.

The five colonies which made the southern group belonged to another world. They too were settled by Englishmen in the seventeenth century, but without the high motive which made the settlement of New England the most memorable adventure in colonization in modern history. The South is a land of rich soil, of rivers, lagoons and swamps ; of a semi-tropical and relaxing climate, eminently suited for the cultivation of cotton, rice, tobacco and indigo. These physical conditions determined the character of its civilization and the quality of its social life. The well-to-do settler cultivated his crops upon large and isolated plantations. He gathered about him an army of dependents and slaves, and became in time the dictator of his little community. The traditions of the Mother country were jealously preserved and the Established Church was the form of worship affected by the aristocracy.



Communication with the homeland was easier and more agreeable than with the industrial colonies of the North. Thus it came about in the passage of time that between the English colonies of the North and South a gulf was fixed, unbridged by common interests or sympathies.

Between these two groups lay the settlements of other European nations. New York and New Jersey belonged to the Dutch, Delaware to Sweden and the great central, or "Key Stone" State of Pennsylvania was settled, not only by the English Quakers but by immigrants from Germany and other districts of Europe.

Separated as these colonies were by temperamental differences, by physical conditions, as well as by the difficulties and dangers of travel, they nevertheless possessed in common that spirit of independence which is the natural temper of new and isolated communities. Jealous and antagonistic among themselves they could act together when aroused by fear of encroachment from without. We must remember that this was the age of liberty, when even calm and wise men were swept away on torrents of emotion by the mere sound of the word Tyranny. However the right of the English Parliament to tax unrepresented Crown Colonies may appear to us, the fact remains that this act stirred to the deepest wrath a band of very distinguished and loyal men. The young Colonel Washington did not break his iron calm over any trifling matter, nor was true-hearted Patrick Henry absurd when he cried: "Give me Liberty or give me Death." The War of Independence was fought

for an outraged sentiment and it was only this one sentiment that had power to draw the colonies into any kind of union.

For the conduct of the war the colonies acted under the name of the United States and proceeded to elect a body of legislators to represent them under the title of "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union." This Colonial Congress played a pitiful and often disgraceful part in the war pageant. It was possessed of no power, could neither raise troops nor impose taxes. Its methods were often downright dishonest (as when it drew large bills of exchange upon its representatives abroad who could meet them only by begging or being reduced to beggary), and it was torn into factions by jealousy and selfish ambition.

When, after seven years, the war was brought to a successful close by the genius of Washington and by the patience, heroism and endurance of his few followers, the new States found themselves overwhelmed by troubles. The sentiment of liberty no longer prevailed over their sectional jealousies; no power existed that could enforce taxation or negotiate loans; enemies were active on their northern, western and southern frontiers; in Europe every man's hand was raised against them, and whatever spirit of co-operation and conciliation the war had created had quickly died away. For five dreary years factional division and strife rent the country and impoverished the land. The Union, about which so many noble words had been uttered, was disintegrating in the heat of sectional and individual passion.

Such was the condition of affairs when the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia under the presidency of Washington in 1787. The object of this memorable gathering was to create a nation, and its first business was to frame a constitution which could harmonize the conflicting interests of the different Sovereign States, while endowing the central government with all the powers by which it could function as a State. This was a formidable task. It was soon discovered that the sentiment, even the necessity, of unity was met by a bitter foe in the stiff doctrine of the Sovereign State. It was clear that the formation of a Federal government meant the surrender on the part of every State of certain jealously guarded rights. And not only were the States divided among themselves but the great natural divisions of North and South were hopelessly estranged upon the question of slavery. The problem before the Convention, therefore, was not to compose an ideal instrument of union but by wise and statesmanlike compromise to effect a conciliation of differing interests which would be acceptable to all the parts.

The constant repetition of the word "State" in the above sentence is significant in itself, as showing, in its double meaning, the sacrifice which was necessary from each unit. Within the Federal Union it could no longer be an independent and self-contained body but an equal partner in a league composed of all the former colonies to be known thenceforth as the United States, by whom alone the sovereign powers of Statehood could be exercised.

These dry historical facts have a direct bearing upon our subject, for it was only after a bitter struggle and because of the extraordinary genius of Alexander Hamilton, who fought single-handed the combined legislative and administrative force of the great State of New York, and of James Madison, who won the battle in the Commonwealth of Virginia, that the adoption of the Constitution was at last assured. Such victories are never cleanly won, and in this instance the price was a compromise which after seventy years of unrest and suspicion was paid upon the battle-fields of the most terrible civil war in recent times.

The first compromise was that the vital question of ultimate authority between a single State and the whole United States was not clearly defined, and the doctrine of a State's right to secede from the Union remained a disturbing factor for three generations. The other compromise was that, to win the assent of the South, slavery, within certain geographical limits, was firmly established as a constitutional right. These limits excluded it for ever from the great stretch of unsettled land north of the Ohio River—known as the North-West Territory—now come into the possession of the National government, and prohibited the importation of slaves after the year 1808.

#### SLAVERY

The introduction of the slave system into the infant colonies by the English government about the middle of the seventeenth century was an act bitterly resented by the liberty-loving settlers. As

an institution it never gained a foothold in the North, nor the genuine approval of the leading people of the South. As late as 1769, in the reign of George III, a Colonial law forbidding further importation of African negroes had been vetoed by the home authorities, in the interest of trade. Five years later the Colonial Convention declared that "the abolition of slavery is the greatest object of desire in these colonies where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state." Among the leaders of the revolutionary period slavery had no apologists. Washington, Jefferson and other public men were indeed slave owners, but they believed that the spirit of liberty, at that moment burning so brightly in the soul of the people, would utterly consume the accursed wrong in future time. Washington's example of providing in his will for the liberation of his slaves, was generally followed. Jefferson trembled for his country when he thought of slavery and remembered that God is just. At this time there were about seven hundred thousand slaves in a total population of four million, and, while their usefulness to Southern planters was too great for them to be dispensed with, they possessed no surplus value. The cotton-growing States found that the cost and labour of preparing that staple for the market under the hand-picking system absorbed nearly the whole interest upon their investment and prevented the building up of an export trade. Thus the sentiment of the hour and the economic situation combined to justify the hope of the revolutionary statesmen that the hated system would gradually die away. They believed that the system was morally



wrong and was especially a curse in a country "dedicated to the proposition that all men are born free and equal." Upon that platform Lincoln took his stand. We shall see how intimately he identified himself with these "fathers" and sought to carry out their principles both in letter and in spirit.

But it was written in the book of destiny that these hopes were not to be fulfilled. In 1793 a young Yale student, named Eli Whitney, spending a holiday in the South, was struck by the slow and laborious process of gathering the cotton crop. His inventive genius was aroused, and as a result he fashioned an instrument known as the cotton gin, which extracted the flower from the fibre so cleanly and expeditiously that cotton growing became a source of immense profit.

This plaything of a young man's holiday created a new industrial era which had an immense effect upon the course of civilization. It made the growing and manufacture of cotton one of the great industries of the world; it regrouped populations, drawing from the land and creating immense manufacturing centres. But it also destroyed all hope of freedom for the negro and gave to slavery the status of an essential institution to human progress. The export of cotton within a generation increased from three hundred bales to three hundred thousand. The number of slaves grew from seven hundred thousand to four million, representing a capital of two thousand million dollars, and their surplus value—that is, their earning capacity above their market value—enriched the South by the enormous sum of

three hundred million dollars a year. The cry grew more and more insistent that the law against slave trading must be repealed and that new land should be opened for the development of slave-holding communities.

In the earlier days the evil of slavery had been mitigated by the just and kindly relationship existing between master and servant. Washington had boasted that no slave of his would voluntarily leave him ; he had once taken off his hat in greeting to an old retainer on the plea that he could not allow a negro to be more polite than himself. Loyalty and devotion seemed inbred in the black man's nature and these qualities were often repaid by consideration and love. Between the " old black mammie " and her foster-child there existed, often throughout life, the tenderest feelings. Childhood playmates could not grow up wholly indifferent to each other's welfare.

On the whole, though with many happy exceptions, the new era brought sad changes to the lot of the slave. He became a chattel, bred like any other animal, for the market. His value had so greatly increased that only the very rich could afford to keep a sufficient number to do all the work of the harvesting season. The planter was therefore driven to hire labour from contractors who owned great gangs of slaves and let them out upon demand. Thirty thousand slaves were annually sent South from the Border States into the cotton belt during the picking season, under conditions of cruelty and misery.

This infamous class of " slave drivers " knew no

mercy. Slaves were a commodity which brought the greatest profit when worked beyond human endurance under the stimulus of the lash, and when worn out thrown aside to die. They were huddled together under the most revolting conditions. Families were torn asunder without pity ; young girls had every natural feeling and every sense of decency violated. The slave market at New Orleans was a veritable hell of human misery. Children who had inherited the cultivated tastes and gifts of their white fathers were doomed to lifelong degradation and torture.

English visitors of that time have recorded the charm of Southern courtesy, the delightful and abounding hospitality, the grace and dignity of feudal life upon the wide-spreading plantations. They did not see the pathetic human beings who owed their lives to the kindly host and the black girl whose body and soul were part of his wealth.

Thus slavery, which the " fathers " had endured as an evil inheritance soon to pass away, had become an economic necessity. It was to be yet more strongly bulwarked by religious sanction. When Lincoln was nominated for the presidency practically every pulpit in the South was proclaiming that slavery was ordained of God. Because it was the Divine order its spread throughout the country was imperiously demanded. Dominion over the whole continent, it was claimed, belonged to the South by right of their superior civilization. Powers that opposed the chosen people must be crushed ; laws must bend and break in compliance to their autocratic wills. This higher appeal to religion was well

expressed by Alexander Stephens, a much honoured Senator from the State of Georgia and later vice-president of the Southern Confederacy. He wrote in a letter : " The prevailing ideas entertained by Jefferson and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the old Constitution were that the enslavement of the African was wrong in principle, morally, socially and politically. Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea : its foundations are laid, its corner stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man ; that slavery-subordination to the white man is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first in the history of the world based upon this great physical, philosophical and moral truth. The best objects of humanity are best attained when there is conformity to the Creator's laws and decrees."

There could be no accommodation between this clear and assured statement of a national policy and Lincoln's earlier declaration : " We allow slavery to exist in the slave States, not because it is right, but from the necessities of the Union. Slavery is a violation of eternal right. We have temporized with it from the necessities of our condition, but as sure as God reigns and school children read, that black foul lie can never be consecrated into God's hallowed truth."

Perhaps the two spirit forces which were gathering for a devastating conflict could not have found nobler spokesmen. Lincoln had brooded all his life over the causes of the approaching tragedy. Born in a slave State, in a class which slavery had

robbed of all the dignity of life, he early discovered the anomaly of the existence of such an institution in a society whose corner stone was the dogma of personal liberty. He saw more clearly than most men that the national purpose embodied in the Federal union would in time be strangled by the entwining monster of slavery and that the slender bond which linked the States into a nation would be snapped, yet he realized how fully the hopes of mankind for government of the people for the people and by the people were involved in the destiny of the American Republic.

We have been led a little in advance of our subject. The new economic value of slavery was not universally welcomed even in the South. It was soon clear that the old dignified order would be swept away in the feverish competition for cotton production and that the legal restrictions upon the spread of slavery must yield to the demand for new and unexhausted land. In 1803, during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, an immense territory, extending fan-shape from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes, including the whole Mississippi basin on the west, had been purchased from France by the United States' government. As parts of these vast regions, now under the control of the Federal Congress, became sufficiently settled to meet the conditions of Statehood they applied for admission into the Union and for all local and national rights bestowed upon the original States by the Constitution. But the law of 1787 had declared that slavery was for ever excluded from all territories belonging to, or acquired by, the Federal govern-



ment, thus confining slavery to the narrow limits of the early South and giving to the North an immense preponderance in the conduct of public affairs. The crisis came in 1820, when a portion of the Louisiana purchase, known as Missouri and already settled by slave-holders, applied for admission to the Union as a slave State. This was the first challenge of the South to the Constitution agreement of thirty-three years before and revealed a temper which directly menaced the integrity of the Union. It was the first skirmish of the Civil War, and was settled after a bitter struggle by admitting the new State with the institution of slavery, but for ever prohibiting slavery from all territory north of latitude  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , which runs through the centre of Missouri. This act is known as the Missouri Compromise, and plays a large part in American history for the next thirty-four years, when its repeal as unlawful by the Supreme Court brought Abraham Lincoln out of his retirement and made him the leader of the new cause.

This Compromise filled the North with dismay. It brought despair into the last days of Thomas Jefferson, himself a slave-owner, as a premonition of the coming storm. All the efforts of statesmen to restrain the ambitions of the South and to keep slavery from becoming an issue could not avail.

At the same time the conscience of a class of Northerners was inflamed with a passionate sense of legalized wrong, which took organized form in the party of Abolition. The moving spirit in the first outburst of moral passion was a poor and unknown printer, named William Lloyd Garrison, who, in

1831, wrote, printed and published from an obscure garret the first number of an anti-slavery paper called "The Liberator," which was destined to fill a large place during the next thirty years. His opening words were: "I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population; I will be as hard as truth and as uncompromising as justice; I will not equivocate; I will not excuse; I will not retreat a single inch and I will be heard." His words poured forth in a white heat, for they must melt the thick ice of self-interest and convention, he said. If a fanatic is a person who pursues one aim, undeterred and undistracted by passing events like a hound upon the scent, that is what the Abolitionist was. He was mobbed, imprisoned and murdered in the North as an enemy to society. Garrison, in the cultured city of Boston, was dragged from the platform by a frenzied mob of substantial citizens, and hustled to the nearest lamp-post with a rope about his neck. It is hard for the present writer to believe that the gentle, benevolent old gentleman whom, in his childhood, he used to see jogging into the city in an old-fashioned chaise, was once the implacable agitator who declared that the revered Constitution was a "league with Hell and a covenant with Death." Never was a hated cause upheld by men and women of such delightful gifts and charms as these New England reformers possessed. The young patrician, Wendell Phillips, was soon enlisted, and devoted to the cause his fortune and his unrivalled eloquence. A generation later his kinsman, Phillips Brooks, by no means unknown in England, took up the torch and from

his Philadelphia pulpit poured forth an impassioned appeal which stirred the hearts of his countrymen.

From this movement, and from all it stood for, Lincoln stood coldly aloof. He said that he had never known a conscious moment when he had not hated slavery with every fibre of his being, but his heart was with the "Fathers," and through their eyes he saw the preservation of the Union as the supreme end of all his endeavour.

This obscure western lawyer saw the problem more clearly than all those cultured Bostonians; his philosophy of contemporary history was deeper and truer than theirs. He had learnt the power of patient waiting for the great moment of action and it was his lot, not theirs, to break the shackles of slavery. He had, to use the words of Bishop Creighton in speaking of Pope Hildebrand, "the greatest mark of political genius—he knew how to wait till the full time had come."

#### THE THREE LEADING ACTORS

The storms of revolution at the end of the eighteenth century brought to the front many remarkable men in America as in Europe. Soldiers, statesmen, financiers, orators—all leaders of distinguished abilities—offered their lives and fortunes to the common cause. It is one of history's ironies that the meaning of the struggle for independence in America should be somewhat obscured by the remoteness of its chief actors from the world's centre of interest. The contemporary events in

France have been recorded and studied from that day to this, until the picture is indelibly printed upon the minds of all. But the more orderly revolution of the colonies was so distinctively a revolution of the English spirit, so logical a result of the first settlements, that it has often been treated merely as an episode in the thrilling story of the British Empire.

Among all the actors in the drama—either in the English parliament or in the colonies themselves—Washington's pre-eminence is unrivalled ; but to half the world Washington has become a statue. These no longer see the passionate, adventurous youth ; the skilful, audacious and watchful soldier ; the enduring, self-sacrificing patriot ; or the wise, judicious and steadfast statesman. They see a figure of bronze, grave, majestic and towering—and such was not the human man who, in 1789, became by universal consent the first President of the United States. He was confronted by a great task. A new nation had come into being, an instrument of union had been framed in the Constitution, but the spirit of the people had been in no wise changed. They had accepted the plan of a loose confederacy of the States for the sake of any advantage or protection that might be derived from it, but had little liking for the surrender of power or privilege to any authority above them.

Under the happiest conditions it would be a stupendous undertaking to devise and construct the complicated machinery of a national government—to establish a national currency and banking system, to impose just and equitable taxation, to

foster industries, trade and education, to frame a wise and permanent foreign policy, and to inaugurate an intricate order of judicial procedure. But the conditions which confronted the new government were far from happy. The suffering and weariness of the revolution had shown that the people were willing to pay a great price for liberty ; the seven years of anarchy had demonstrated the necessity of national unity ; but the problem of possessing both liberty and national union was not yet solved.

The burden of this great task fell upon a young man of thirty-two years of age, newly appointed to the position of Secretary of the Treasury, named Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton is the most romantic figure in early American history. He was born in the West Indian island of Nevis, of Scotch and French parentage ; at fourteen he was the responsible head of an important American store upon that island. After passing through a terrible earthquake he became a student in Columbia University, New York City, and while still a boy published two remarkable tracts which were attributed to Jay, afterwards Chief Justice of the United States. A visit to Boston at the opening of the War converted him to the cause of Independence and he served brilliantly in the army at the head of a company he had himself recruited. A career of great promise as a soldier was cut short by the insistence of Washington that he should become his confidential secretary, with the rank of colonel. It was an extraordinary partnership between the great General and the youth of twenty-two ; more than



once their imperious tempers threatened disruption, only to bind them more closely together. At the end of the war Hamilton reached, by a single step, a position of leadership at the bar in New York and edited, and largely wrote, the famous series of papers upon the science of government under the title of "The Federalist," now secure in its place as classical literature.

His work as Secretary of the Treasury put him in the first rank of constructive statesmen. Indeed, Talleyrand's dictum was that Hamilton, Napoleon and Fox were the three greatest men of the age. He dominated the Cabinet, poured forth in amazing rapidity a series of comprehensive reports concerning every department of government, upon which the whole fabric of the Republic was built. He saw at once that the strength of the Union lay in the prosperity of the people; calling to his aid the intelligent and responsible elements of the country, he forced through Congress his policy of funding all national and state debts and, by the establishment of a National Bank, distributing the burden equally over the whole population. Together with Washington he sought to maintain an attitude of neutrality and aloofness towards Europe while encouraging every variety of home industry. His success was almost instantaneous. From a state of bankruptcy the nation was suddenly lifted up on a mighty wave of prosperity and the great institutions of national life were firmly established. This miracle of achievement was accomplished in four years, when Hamilton left the Cabinet and returned to his law practice in the city of New

York. He was killed in a duel in 1804 with an unworthy political rival named Aaron Burr.

By birth, instinct, training and conviction Hamilton, like Washington, was an aristocrat. He was a slight and graceful figure, elegant in habit and appearance, and allied by marriage with one of the most distinguished families in America. His pattern of government was the English constitution and system. He utterly abhorred the French Revolution and all its work.

Opposite to Hamilton at the Cabinet table sat his distinguished rival, Thomas Jefferson. He had been the accredited minister of his country to France during the great upheaval, and had returned to accept the new post of Secretary of State with his mind saturated in a tepid sentiment of fraternity and goodwill. He was a tall, burly, unkempt man, a coward and a secret assassin of reputations; malignant and vindictive while his tongue was uttering sentiments of universal love; a Virginia slave-holder and the apostle of liberty; a defender of the September massacres and the champion of human brotherhood; madly ambitious and lacking every quality of high leadership. He framed the Declaration of Independence and was never known to lift a finger in defence of its principles. Yet this maker of phrases, this intimate of Robespierre, this intriguing sentimentalist was probably quoted by a thousand orators in the last election as a prophet and a seer. For a quarter of a century his fame overshadowed that of Washington and Hamilton, and for more than a hundred years he had influenced the policy of the American government.

He was a gifted student, a practical inventor and an accomplished musician, but he is best remembered for his extraordinary industry in building up, largely through correspondence, the party which overthrew the policy of Washington and Hamilton and dominated American affairs for several generations.

Jefferson takes high rank among political leaders because he was the necessary corrective to Hamilton's main purpose of subordinating all other interests to the creation of a strong centralized government. That purpose was, indeed, the great demand of the hour—the only way to bring order out of chaos—but it did ignore the fact that the new government rested upon the consent of the governed. Hamilton believed in an oligarchy of wealth and talent and had little trust in the popular will. He made the government act for the people but not by the people, and that was not then, any more than now, the spirit of democratic institutions. Jefferson, for both good and evil, restored to the plain man his personal responsibility for the welfare of his country. He gave to him the full dignity and power of citizenship, while he grafted upon the American stock of independence something of the philosophy of the French Revolution with much of its looseness of thought and expression. The opening words of the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Jefferson, are the best illustration that can be given of his peculiar type of mind. They run :

“ We hold these truths to be self-evident : that all men are created equal ; that they are en-

dowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights ; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed."

Hamilton and Jefferson, in their antagonistic and irreconcilable natures, embodied the two spirit forces which have contended for mastery throughout American history—or rather throughout the history of mankind. It was the study of these forces that wrung from Lincoln the despairing cry : " Must a government of necessity be too strong for the liberties of the people, or too weak to maintain itself ? " That question is not yet answered.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE YOUNG LAWYER

WE left the young Lincoln riding along the road upon a borrowed horse to the village of Springfield, which, partly through his influence, had recently been made the capital of the State of Illinois, and where for the next twenty-two years he was to make his home.

It was a humble enough beginning of a great career, but it was not lacking in conditions which opened the door of opportunity for success. Lincoln was not wholly unknown, for during his two terms in the State Legislature he had demonstrated his unusual ability and his kindly humour. His extreme poverty was no bar in a community which was still too new to have established an aristocracy of wealth. To our eyes he presented a grotesque figure, but his social gifts were quite equal to those of his associates. He was just one of many young men who were "growing up with the country," artlessly linking their personal fortunes with the march of material development.

This western fringe of civilization, in which most of Lincoln's life was spent, was the rich middle part of the American continent, now teeming with population and dotted with great cities. The



wealth of this broad land was as yet unexplored and its glory lay in the future ; but there was an indefinable faith in every soul that the plan of Nature was to bestow its immeasurable gifts upon all who had power to grasp them. Opportunity walked hand in hand with energy and bred a generation of hard, keen, masterful men, whose eyes were never lifted far above the earth and whose powers were rarely distracted by idealistic aims. Whatever the national destiny of America might be, their own clear purpose was to possess the resources of the land. With all their spirit of independence, and a certain expansive emotionalism about their favoured lot, they were distinctly practical men, absorbed in the pursuit of their own ends. Their intellectual and social standards were pitched low, and any man of ordinary gifts who floated upon the tide might hope to win a livelihood and local standing. Despising the conventions of more highly organized society, they were nevertheless subject to the petty rules which govern within the narrow boundaries of a people shut away from the great world.

Lincoln saw much to love in these neighbours among whom he lived on terms of genial fellowship. He never grew away from them, and in the saddest hours of his later life the memory of them could fill his heart with merriment. But to the modern reader they seem a race of intensely selfish, suspicious, distrustful men, whose passion for personal gain and whose contempt for any standard of excellence but their own dried up many of the interests and larger sympathies of life.

At twenty-eight Lincoln was only at the beginning

of a career upon which he had entered over so hard a road. At fifty he possessed a little wooden house and a fortune of three thousand dollars (about six hundred guineas). By the standards of the community in which he lived that was a pitiful showing for years of toil ; and by his own standard his career up to that time had been a failure. It is true that he was a man of influence in the political circles of the State, but he had again and again been thwarted in his personal ambitions and his extraordinary powers were as yet unknown.

The truth is that in his subsequent greatness there was no mark of the influences which played upon him during the earlier years of his manhood. A famous Frenchman said that the secret of his own success was "a friend." So far as we know, during that long period, Lincoln had no helping and intelligent friend to advise and cheer him. He once had spoken to his idol, Henry Clay, and been roundly snubbed for his temerity ; and once, when a member of the National House of Representatives in Washington, had been one at a breakfast party given by Daniel Webster. Beyond these two instances it is not recorded that he ever had even the slightest association with any man or woman of distinction until just before his nomination for the Presidency. Even then he had only a limited acquaintance with the leaders of his own party.

In the Springfield, Illinois, of that day the absorbing business of life was "getting on," and the one standard of success was money-making. Any interest in general abstract subjects would have aroused strong suspicions. Even law was less

concerned with the principles of jurisdiction than with the settlement of small disputes. Out of this flat desert of mediocrity and materialism, now and then a man did rise who appeared like a mountain lifting itself above the plain; but none of the earlier associates of Lincoln thought of him as in any way superior to themselves. He lived as they lived, was interested in the local affairs which absorbed their interests, spoke their language and matched stories with theirs. He kept himself aloof from the reform movements of the day and from the sporadic outbursts of religious enthusiasm. It was, of course, observed after a time that he was utterly wanting in "money-sense," that he was quixotically honest and fair in dealing with court cases; that he had no physical vices and that, while his stories were often coarse, he left upon everyone an impression of purity of mind and heart. Partly because of, and perhaps partly in spite of, these qualities he was generally respected and loved, but there are no signs that his superior mental gifts were recognized until a much later period.

The play of all these influences upon the young lawyer was to strengthen the secret ambitions he had long cherished. His erratic and not wholly pleasing youth was left far behind, and he began that long and systematic study of the foundations and institutions of his country which, after many years, made him the prophet of the people.

Nor was he content with knowledge. He was possessed of a passion for mastery, and it was said that dissatisfaction with definitions of the word "demonstrate" first drove him to the study of

Euclid. He framed his mind to think with exactitude, with logical sequence and with complete self-conviction. Expression was to him the outward symbol of results that had been already arrived at through mental processes. That is why he was not a *ready* speaker and why, but for his quick humour, he might have been thought a slow-witted man. In this mental court he raised all great problems of society and government and was in turn prosecutor, defendant and judge.

The outward story of these years can be easily told. We can see the lawyer of growing local fame, moving over the circuit year after year, observant, capable, reasonably industrious and unreasonably indolent, kindly, humorous, seeking popularity and influence and only too ready to drop every task to tell a good story or do a good act. But what we cannot see is the tragedy of that pent-up mind, the daily dampening of that glowing spirit. For years he had brooded over the dangers which beset his country; but nowhere in that self-complacent company did he find a sympathizing and understanding friend.

Until the last decade of his life he was also a political solitary—not whole-heartedly a Whig or a Democrat, an Abolitionist or a Free Soiler. He was, as we have seen him to be, a passionate believer in a just and free nation, strongly governed by chosen rulers. He held the great doctrines of Hamilton without his distrust in the masses. He accepted Jefferson's principles of self-rule but saw the hope of all liberty-loving people in the stability of the Union. He believed that government was for the



people, but by word and act he proclaimed his faith that the highest duty of citizenship is to serve the State. In none of these articles of his creed was he in harmony with his surroundings. His soul lived in a desert while he yet dwelt in intimate companionship with his fellows.

This is what is meant by his dual life and why his personality was then and still remains so mystifying to the onlooker. No statesman was ever more ready to receive advice, to recast a statement, to delay action or to reconsider a decision. To many about him he seemed, at least for a time, timid, yielding and uncertain in his policy ; whereas he was really industriously gathering material which was subjected to analysis in his wonderful mental laboratory, to come forth at last in the form of a considered and firm decision.

It is easy to fashion the different parts of a public man's career into an harmonious whole after the course of that career is run, but it is more difficult to see these parts, as he saw them, when the future is veiled in a cloud. Lincoln must often have asked himself why he was making these preparations for a career infinitely greater than any that was likely to come to him. We know that in middle-life he entertained ambitions for a seat in the United States senate ; but, in these earlier days, the future held little prospect beyond a modest competence and a respectable position among a people to whom his real nature was for ever hidden.

Moreover at this time a cloud of sorrow shut out all visions of the future. Two years before coming to Springfield he had become engaged to a young



woman named Ann Rutledge, whose father was a tavern-keeper in Kentucky. She was said to possess great charm and beauty but her life had been saddened by a former attachment to an unworthy man. Not long after her engagement to Lincoln she was stricken with a mortal illness, and before her death had opened her heart to him in a parting interview. This tragic event filled Lincoln with despair and intensified the natural melancholy of his nature. For a time he seems to have been on the verge of insanity, and his friends feared for his life. After he was well established in his profession the shadow of this sad experience still hung over him and it is clear that it was the grand passion of his heart. Some time later he was drawn into an engagement with another woman, partly through a jest with her sister. It was an unfortunate episode and was happily terminated by the lady herself. But unfortunately, either through pique or bravado, Lincoln committed his feeling to paper in a scurrilous letter written to a woman friend. It was a return, for the moment, but only for a moment, to the resentful, spiteful spirit which marred a certain period of his youth.

A year later he met the lady who was to become his wife. Mary Todd, in 1838, was a vivacious, high-spirited girl of twenty-one. She had many suitors, among whom Lincoln's future rival, Stephen Douglas, was said to be numbered. Nevertheless, the great awkward young lawyer was favoured, and there followed four years of uncertainty and trouble before the union was consummated.

Lincoln's relations with women will ever be an

enigma. His doubts of his fitness for marriage were strengthened by the love and sorrow of his heart for Ann Rutledge. At best he must have been an erratic husband. His easy-going habits, his gentle temper and his predilection for the company of men might have tried the patience of a less excitable person than his wife. Besides, while a young wife might face poverty bravely and cheerfully at the beginning, as Mrs. Lincoln did, she was justified in hoping for better things as the years went on. In Springfield the only standard of success was money, and Lincoln was incurably deficient in the gift of money-making. The possessions he sought after had no market value among the people with whom Mrs. Lincoln wished to stand well. There is sufficient testimony that Lincoln at this time lacked many of the amenities and personal attentions a woman expects from her husband, and his fits of abstraction and melancholy must sometimes have made him a sorry companion of the fireside. There is this to be said, however ; Mrs. Lincoln, in spite of an irritable temper, was a wise and practical helpmate for her husband. She recognized his greatness long before it was appreciated by others. By her firmness she prevented him from accepting a Government position which would have lightened her burden and ruined his career. They were more and more drawn together by their devotion to their children ; and on the last afternoon of his life, while they were driving together, Lincoln glowed over the prospect of their quiet, happy future in their little wooden house at Springfield, after the four years of office were ended. And, of Lincoln himself, who that knows can ever

forget the grave and gentle courtesy which distinguished his relation to all women during his public life? They flocked to him with their anxieties and sorrows, and his door and his heart were ever open to them. Against many protests he strained the powers of his office to succour them and with such a sweet and paternal sympathy that even now the plain stories bring tears to the eyes. From that time forth he was less known as "Honest Abe," and people spoke of him as their "Father Abraham."

One of his letters, which has been preserved, was written to a stricken mother, Mrs. Bixley of Boston, November 21st, 1864. The President said :

"DEAR MADAM,—I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Attorney General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

For the next fifteen years the outward life of Lincoln flowed on uneventfully. He had been quick to establish himself among his brethren of the bar and to commend himself by his learning and skill. It was a curious sort of practice in which these mid years of his life were spent. The office of the famous firm of Lincoln and Herndon was a small, untidy place, and its most important piece of furniture was a horse-hair covered sofa upon which Lincoln sprawled for hours at a time. His habit of declaiming or of preparing his cases out loud, while utterly unconscious of his surroundings, was no help to the legal studies of his partner. However, the bulk of the practice consisted of cases picked up when off on the circuit. As there were no large towns where courts were regularly established, and whither the people flocked, the courts went where the people were. The Judge set forth upon horseback, and after him trooped the company of lawyers, each carrying his wardrobe and law library in a saddle-bag. When reaching a village or hamlet where cases were to be tried the court convened in the largest room that could be found, possibly a saloon or church, and the litigants selected their counsels on the spot. As the accommodations in such places were indescribably mean, usually only the judge was assigned to a private room and the others herded together as best they could. Cases were studied, either in some quiet spot out of doors in summer, or in the crowded inn-parlour during the winter months. When the day's work was over the most delightful form of Western relaxation began with the whole company gathered on the porch or

around the fire, to match wit with wit and story with story.

It was a small world but it was crammed with human interest. Upon Lincoln it exercised an irresistible attraction ; he never wearied of its hardships or its pleasures, and was not long in becoming one of the most notable as well as one of the most popular figures upon the circuit.

How much this meant when tested by the higher standard of practice in great centres remains an open question. An important biography of Lincoln as a lawyer places his legal talent and learning very high, and Mr. Choate has expressed admiration for the intelligence and training of some of the men who won their spurs in this rough and ready practice. It is probable that on the circuit Lincoln's cases required no great amount of preparation, but even in these he showed his qualities. His notable successes were those that appealed to his sense of justice and truth. Law he held to be the instrument of justice and the basis of justice to be truth. No advocate, he believed and practised, should be guilty of misstatement or misrepresentation in argument. He is said to have possessed great skill in anticipating and expounding his opponent's case, and a gift for simple and lucid exposure of its weaknesses. He was by no means above an appeal to the sympathies of a jury, but his greatest influence was won by the conviction he left upon them of a fair and open mind.

Lincoln had the nature and equipment of a great lawyer and was doubtless fully conscious of his power. The ambition of his youth to engage in contest



with the strongest and most skilful was one of his marked traits as an advocate. Once he was retained as a junior counsel on a railroad case of great importance, and he went to Chicago full of anticipation of meeting some of the most famous lawyers of the land. The senior counsel upon his side was a man named Stanton, who was later to win immortality as Lincoln's Secretary of War. Stanton looked the young Westerner over with unconcealed contempt and dismissed him from the case. In later days he found many occasions to express the same feeling, but at the end it was he who closed Lincoln's eyes in death and uttered the short and noble panegyric : " Now he belongs to the ages."

All his life long Lincoln was subject to someone's contempt and the victim of bitter disappointments. In no position did he conform to the accepted type. He was conscious of power, but at this period there was absolutely no outlet for it. Others had passed him in the race for political preferment. One uneventful term in the House of Representatives, and the surrender of his claims for the nomination of his party for the National Senate, were all he could show for years of political activity. He believed that his public career was over and absorbed himself more and more in his professional life.

But as we shall see in the next chapter, mighty forces were at work throughout the country which boded ill for the nation. Cloud storms were gathering from every quarter, and each day brought them nearer to the inevitable crash. All this Lincoln saw and felt, as it proved, more clearly than any other man, but for the moment he was helpless. For

some years to come his rôle was to shoulder his way through the rough crowds, with the ever ready jest upon his lips and that look of tragic sadness in his eyes. He was to watch and study and wait and agonize until the hour of his appearance had struck. Then, as if his lips were anointed from on high, he was to pour forth the secret treasures of his soul and lead the people through the storm unto the haven of peace.

## CHAPTER V

### THE APPROACHING STORM

TO the casual reader of American history the second quarter of the nineteenth century presents a dull and uninviting story. The heroic age had passed. Revolution had brought to the front in public affairs a group of leaders whose distinguished talents had lifted the struggle to a high moral and intellectual plain. In Lincoln's mind the fathers of the country—Washington, Hamilton, Franklin, Jefferson, Jay, Morris, Madison and others—held the same authoritative and sacred place that the "Early Fathers" hold in the minds of devout Churchmen. But the period which immediately followed sank to a lower level and, with a few notable exceptions, produced no statesmen of universal fame. Yet these were the formative years of the young Republic, and throughout the land a great fermentation was working within the body politic.

We have already seen that the Constitution of 1787 contained the seeds of future strife, by its indefiniteness upon the crucial problem of State or National sovereignty and by its compromise upon the question of slavery. The strife was not long delayed, for the invention of the cotton gin and the

opening of the markets of the world to its staple product soon gave to the South a preponderance of political power. The interests of the industrial North and of the agricultural South were sharply opposed. The United States were becoming more and more disunited. In the North infant industries could only flourish behind high tariff walls ; in the South high tariff was only an added burden—an increase upon the cost of production and of living. The economic necessities of the South were land and cheap labour ; of the North skilled, high priced labour and extended markets over the world.

So, diversity of interests was planted deep in the soil of necessity. The fruit of this planting was a growing antagonism of spirit. The South had never given full allegiance to the national idea. It had come into the Union as a confederation of States which linked themselves together for their mutual benefit, but which in so doing surrendered none of their sovereign rights. A serious crisis arose as early as 1832 when the State of South Carolina passed an ordinance declaring that the tariff laws of 1828 and 1832 were null and void and not binding in that State.

Thus the great controversy was begun. The issue of the next thirty years was based upon the declaration that a State possesses the right to nullify any act of the National Congress that is not agreeable to its interests or desires and, having exercised that right, may establish its own sovereignty apart from the Confederation. This sinister doctrine was challenged by President Jackson in a spirited proclamation affirming the national integrity, and

announcing his purpose to uphold the laws of the United States. The issue was now clearly defined and the opposing forces arrayed for the long conflict. On the one hand the eloquent tongue of Daniel Webster—the most powerful interpreter of Constitutional Law in American history—was pleading the cause of “Union and Liberty, now and forever”; on the other hand the keen and subtle intelligence of John C. Calhoun, senator from South Carolina, was enlisted in spreading the doctrine of the “Sovereign State,” in which doctrine, he early saw, lay the security of the institution of slavery. And between these two champions stood the figure of the most representative and popular statesman of his day. To the mind of Henry Clay, who delighted in the title, “The Architect of Compromises,” the paramount interest of the American people was the development of their own national resources. He dreaded a clash between the North and South which should interfere with the prosperity of the country. By a fruitful system of compromises he believed that the threatening danger could be averted and incompatible principles be reconciled by happy adjustment.

The basic principle of the American system is in the statement that all men are born free and equal; that it is the inalienable right of every human being to pursue health, wealth and happiness. Yet the constitution sanctioned and legalized the ownership of man by man. Such vital contradictions could not abide peaceably within the same household, and it was inevitable that, with the growth of the American principle in one section and the pressure of economic



necessity in the other, the hour of conflict must inevitably strike. This was the ghost in the house of American Democracy. It haunted all the middle period of the Republic. No leader had dared to grapple with the intruder, and no political party dared to come face to face with it.

Lincoln was quick to see the true meaning of the Southern aggression. It meant domination of the whole country by the principle of slavery or the destruction of the Union. The field of action was to be upon the question of admitting into national rights such parts of territorial land belonging to the nation as had fulfilled the conditions of Statehood. It will be remembered that slavery had been for ever excluded from the great tract of virgin soil lying north-west of the Ohio River, but that, after the controversy over the admission of Missouri as a slave State in 1820, a new law had been passed making the southern boundary of the free land latitude 36' 30°. This was the Missouri Compromise already referred to, and its author was Henry Clay. It was the hope of Clay and his contemporaries that by this compromise the vexed question of slavery was settled for all future time. That was not to be. Cotton imperiously demanded more land and the spirit of the prosperous South was increasingly aggressive and arrogant. Nor was the temper of the North a passive one. The public mind was becoming more and more aware that the extension of the slave system into free territory meant the final adoption of that system as the national policy of the Republic.

When, therefore, a new crisis arose in 1854 over the admission of Kansas and Nebraska into the

Union the claims of the South were met by a determined opposition from the anti-slavery forces of the North. These proposed States lay north and west of the Ohio River and, by the existing law, were clearly outside the boundaries of slavery.

At this moment the figure of Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln's old antagonist, looms large upon the stage. We shall hear more of this man. In that fateful hour he was perhaps the most powerful political leader in the country and the popular candidate of the Democratic party for the Presidency. In order to attain the great object of his ambition it was necessary that he should win the support of Southern Democrats by appearing as the champion of their sectional interests, but without alienating his followers in the North. As chairman of the Territorial Committee in the U.S. Senate he was in charge of a bill dealing with the government of Kansas and Nebraska to which was attached a clause empowering the people of those States to settle the question of slavery within their borders by popular vote. It is not clear how this repudiation of the existing law escaped the attention of Northern senators. It is said to have been attached to the bill in the form of an innocent looking "rider" and thus to have escaped scrutiny.

It was a momentous act and presaged the coming storm. The country was stunned when its true meaning was realized, for it was the overthrow of the most sacred idea in American nationality. Douglas had given to his bill the high-sounding title of "Popular Sovereignty," and for the moment rode upon the crest of a wave of Southern popularity.

It is possible that he did not at once appreciate the significance of his treacherous deed, for his mind was not attuned to the higher patriotism ; nor had he Lincoln's vision of his country as consecrated to the cause of human liberty. He opened the flood-gates to slavery by robbing the nation of its moral responsibility, and brought the supreme question in the civilization of that era to the petty courts of the local whim or passion of the people.

Kansas was the first test of the working value of popular sovereignty. From North and South streams of emigrants poured into the State to seize the sovereign power for the cause of freedom or slavery. It was the last and most desperate effort of the South to gain ascendancy in national affairs, and it failed. New England settlers, aided by a highly organized society of emigrations, arrived in such overwhelming numbers that the issue of a popular election was never in doubt. Driven thus to extremity, the slave-holders of Missouri, abetted by the National Administration, formed bands of marauders, known as the Border Ruffians, who crossed the line into Kansas, in the darkness of the night, and terrorized the country side by murder and plunder. Fraud, trickery, rapine and murder were the recognized instruments for overthrowing the popular will.

Events were now hastening to a crisis. Every outrage against personal rights or orderly government made the issue clearer in the public mind and stiffened the purpose of the North to resist the encroachment of the growing tyranny of slavery.

Lincoln, we may believe, was watching and

studying the movements of the time with an anxious heart. For five years he had been in partial retirement from political life and devoting himself to his profession and his home. Now he suddenly leaped to the front.

The occasion was the gathering together of a group of public men in the little town of Bloomington, Illinois, to form a new political party to give coherence to the rising national purpose of restraining slavery within its legal boundaries.

Upon this subject these men were of one mind ; upon every other they were divided by sectional and political prejudices. While he was "over at Danville Court," Lincoln had been elected a representative from Springfield to the Convention and now sat in the body of the House. His sensitive nature must have felt the play of hidden, discordant elements throughout the assembly, and when called upon to speak he realized that his great task must be to bring harmony and sympathy and understanding into the Convention. Evidently he had made no special preparation and he began hesitatingly, slowly and in a thin monotonous tone. But the flame of his convictions rose steadily higher until his words glowed with the suppressed heat of his own soul and scattered fire-sprays over his enchanted hearers. Then was witnessed an unusual scene. Under the spell of his eloquence even the trained reporters laid down their pencils and with the whole assemblage "arose from their chairs with pale faces and quivering lips and pressed unconsciously towards him." One of the reporters, Mr. Joseph Medill, afterwards a famous editor,



recalled the scene. " I did make a few paragraphs of what Lincoln said in the first eight or ten minutes, but I became so absorbed in his magnetic oratory that I forgot myself and ceased to take notes. I well remember that after Lincoln sat down, and calm succeeded the tempest, I waked myself out of a sort of hypnotic trance and then thought of my report to the ' Tribune.' " This was known for forty years as " Lincoln's Lost Speech." He was quite unable to reproduce it, and until 1896 it was supposed that no notes had been made from it. But one man had escaped the infection—a young lawyer who made a shorthand report and in his later years wrote it out. After passing through the hands of some of those who were present and receiving their endorsements, it was published in a well-known magazine and is now included among his speeches.

This remarkable speech—delivered at white heat and inspired by a definite purpose—was in fact a declaration of principles upon which Lincoln, and the party he led, answered the challenge of the South and, after four years, fought through the Civil War. It is so important to our understanding of this crisis that a few extracts must be torn from the closely woven fabric of logic and passion to help us on our way :

" This thing of slavery is more powerful than its supporters—even than the high priests that minister at its altar. It debauches even our greatest men. It gathers strength, like a rolling snowball, by its own infamy. Monstrous crimes are committed in its name by persons collectively which they would



not dare to commit as individuals. Its aggressions and encroachments almost surpass belief. In a despotism, one might not wonder to see slavery advance steadily and remorselessly into new dominions ; but is it not wonderful, is it not even alarming, to see its steady advance in a land dedicated to the proposition that 'all men are created equal' ?

"It was by that policy that here in Illinois the early fathers fought the good fight and gained the victory. In 1824 the free men of our State, led by Governor Coles (who was a native of Maryland and President Madison's private secretary), determined that those beautiful groves should never re-echo the dirge of one who has no title to himself. By their resolute determination, the winds that sweep across our broad prairies shall never cool the parched brow, nor shall the unfettered streams that bring joy and gladness to our free soil water the tired feet of a slave ; but so long as those heavenly breezes and sparkling streams bless the land, or the groves and the fragrance of their memory remain, the humanity to which they minister shall be for ever free.

"Can we as Christian men, and strong and free ourselves, wield the sledge or hold the iron which is to manacle anew an already oppressed race ? 'Woe unto them,' it is written, 'that decree unrighteous decrees and that write grievousness which they have prescribed.' Can we afford to sin any more deeply against human liberty ?

"It is a very strange thing, and not solvable by any moral law that I know of, that if a man loses his horse, the whole country will turn out to

help hang the thief ; but if a man but a shade or two darker than I am is himself stolen, the same crowd will hang one who aids in restoring him to liberty. Such are the inconsistencies of slavery, where a horse is more sacred than a man ; and the essence of squatter or popular sovereignty—I don't care how you call it—is that if one man chooses to make a slave of another, no third man shall be allowed to object.

“ The conclusion of all is, that we must restore the Missouri Compromise. We must highly resolve that Kansas must be free. We must reinstate the birthday promise of the Republic ; we must reaffirm the Declaration of Independence ; we must make good in essence, as well as in form, Madison's avowal that ‘ the word slave ought not to appear in the Constitution ’ ; and we must go even further, and decree that only local law, and not that time-honoured instrument shall shelter a slave-holder. We must make this a land of liberty in fact, as it is in name. But in seeking to attain these results—so indispensable if the liberty which is our pride and boast shall endure—we will be loyal to the Constitution and to the ‘ flag of our Union,’ and no matter what our grievance—even though Kansas shall come in as a slave State ; and no matter what theirs—even if we shall restore the Compromise—we will say to the Southern disunionists, we won't go out of the Union, and you SHAN'T !

“ Let us meanwhile appeal to the sense and patriotism of the people and not to their prejudices ; let us spread the floods of enthusiasm here aroused all over these vast prairies, so suggestive of freedom.

There is both power and a magic in popular opinion. To that let us now appeal ; and while, in all probability, no resort to force will be needed, our moderation and forbearance will stand us in good stead when, if ever, we must make an appeal to battle and to THE GOD OF HOSTS."

By words like these Lincoln gained his great aim, for he not only brought harmony into a discordant assemblage but he built a solid platform of national purpose upon which all the different elements in the new Republican party could stand together. Lincoln had given the issue its true national meaning. To be sure the barrier between the slave State of Missouri and the free territory of Kansas was no higher than an imaginary line, but the crossing of that line meant the surrender of the last stronghold of the American idea. Slavery, so Lincoln held, was an excrescence upon the democratic body, too deeply rooted to permit of the surgeon's knife, but not yet of sufficient growth to poison the whole body. The experts of the North gave divided counsels as to the remedy. Radical Abolitionists would perform a major operation, even though it brought death to the body. Timid patriots were not wanting who would close their eyes to the presence of any malady. Like a skilled physician Lincoln put his finger upon the diseased spot and sought to check its growth.

Events were moving rapidly at this time. In 1857 the country was startled by a decision of the Supreme Court that neither negro slaves nor their descendants, slave or free, could become citizens of the United States ; that the Missouri Compromise

was unconstitutional and that Congress had no right to prohibit the carrying of slaves into any State or Territory. This astounding decision was the result of the claim of free citizenship on the part of a negro slave named Dred Scott, who had been carried by his master into the free State of Nebraska, and it raised the whole question of the right of negro citizenship in any part of the Union. Against the obvious fact that from the beginning no colour line existed in many Northern States, a majority of the Court issued the decree that the negro was denied all human rights, and as a slave was only the chattel of its owner.

This decision was hailed with wild enthusiasm throughout the South and dealt a staggering blow to the new Republican party, for it cut away the supports upon which the whole platform rested. Of course, if Congress had no control over public territory, the contention that slavery could be legally restrained fell to the ground, and the last bulwark against the spread of human bondage was swept away.

That was the crisis. The next two years were to prove that Lincoln, more than any man of his generation, was mentally and morally equipped to meet it. For this moment his whole life had been a preparation. He was now to build upon the broad and secure foundation which he had laid in the long years of study and discipline. He was to call to his aid an immense store of hidden knowledge and the great resources of his moral convictions. For these two years the old Lincoln seems to have disappeared : jest and pointed story gave place to closely woven



argument, to simple and logical exposition and to frequent outbursts of splendid eloquence.

The last act in his life drama opened with a series of remarkable debates between himself and Senator Douglas. Douglas, on his way to the Presidential chair, must take his first step towards it by obtaining the endorsement of his State through re-election to the National Senate. He had much to explain to his constituents and he needed the prestige of a notable local triumph. The Republican party immediately nominated Lincoln as his opponent. Lincoln was now in his fiftieth year and in many ways seemed an unpromising champion against so mighty an antagonist as the great Douglas. He was as yet comparatively unknown and inexperienced in the larger affairs of State. His party was only four years old and had not become united and strong from many hard-fought battles. In 1858 the struggle between conscience and self-interest was by no means won, and every timid trader feared to offend the South. Lincoln had to break up new ground ; to blaze out a new path through a veritable jungle of feelings.

This he set himself to do with characteristic foresight. His speech of acceptance was prepared with great care, but before delivering it he called a council of his closest political friends and read to them these startling words :

“ If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed



object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy that agitation has not only not ceased but has been constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. '*A house divided against itself cannot stand.*' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall ; but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other."

This was indeed a challenge. His friends were aghast. Not one of them had a word but of condemnation. It was "party suicide," a "disrupting statement," "away ahead of its time," and finally was summed up by one critical auditor as a "damned fool utterance." Lincoln listened patiently to each opinion before he gave his final verdict. "Friends," he said, "this thing has been retarded long enough. The time has come when these sentiments should be uttered ; and if it is decreed that I should go down because of this speech, then let me go down linked to truth—let me die in the advocacy of what is just and right." These words express a noble sentiment and are generally accepted as authentic, but it is hard to make them sound like Lincoln. He was not eager to die at that time, but he had taken Douglas' measure with such exquisite accuracy that he was gently leading him, step by step, to political destruction. The thunderbolt fell a little later. In a series of joint debates, to which we shall return,

each candidate was allowed to ask the other certain questions of policy which made the substance of debate at the next meeting. Lincoln had planned four such questions and the second of the four had to do with Douglas' "great, patient, everlasting principle of 'Popular Sovereignty.' " Lincoln wanted to know how a Territorial Legislature could prohibit slavery in its own territory if, as the Supreme Court had declared in the Dred Scott case, Congress, the fount of any authority Territorial Legislature possessed, had no such power. There was but one answer Douglas could make and keep the support of the people of Illinois. It was that slavery cannot exist in the territories unless the people will it and protect it by police regulations. But that inevitable answer enraged the slave-holders in the South, hopelessly split the Democratic party, and gave Douglas the distinction of holding Lincoln's hat at his first inauguration ceremony as President of the United States.

It must be remembered that Lincoln was intensely ambitious to hold a seat in the National Senate, and he was well aware that this question meant his defeat. To his protesting friends he replied: "Gentlemen, I am killing larger game; if Douglas answers he will never be President, and the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this."

We have quoted enough from Lincoln's speeches to show the high purpose which directed all his activities, and the splendid vision of his country's destiny which filled the horizon of his outlook. But we have seen little of him at close quarters as a

working politician. This subtle, ingenious question explains much. It was a skilful play in the game—a trap, set and baited, to catch his opponent. With so uplifting a cause a lesser man would have been content with eloquent declarations of moral platitudes; but Lincoln indulged in no illusions. He was no armchair reformer, but a skilled craftsman in the trade of politics. In spite of his deep conviction of the eternal antagonism between abstract good and evil he knew that moral victories are won on the human field of battle. He fought this conflict with all the weapons of his armoury. For Douglas he had the same tolerance he exercised towards all men, but there was an instinctive hostility between them. For twenty years they had been political foes, but Douglas had grown great and powerful while he had remained a provincial lawyer. It is quite likely that this encounter was welcomed by Lincoln for personal as well as political reasons, and it may have cost him a pang to surrender the prospect of an immediate triumph for an expectation in the future.

These debates were a forensic epic. Nothing like them was probably ever known before—certainly never since. The matter and manner of debate, the physical and mental contrast of the contestants, the places of meeting, were all unusual. In the groves and open spaces of a Western State and before audiences of provincial rustics, two mighty champions wrestled for the prize of a nation's destiny. During the three months' campaign seven of these joint debates were held, in the open air, before great crowds of people. These people came together from

far distant points, travelling in carts, or ox teams, or on horseback and pitching their camps for several days. It was a motley assembly of the Western countryside, clad in homely garments, rough in speech and manner, but independent, intelligent and eager to hear of the great issue of the hour. It was Democracy in action, such as Greece and England and the American colonies had known in other days.

Douglas had long been the idol of many of them. He was four years younger than Lincoln, born in New England, where he had been apprenticed to a cabinet maker. He had studied law under the same conditions that Lincoln did and at twenty-one had arrived in Springfield, penniless. In rapid succession he had shouldered his way into one position after another until at thirty-four he reached the high dignity of a United States senator. He was a small man, with a magnificent head, graceful and winning in manner, a skilled debater and a marvellously eloquent orator.

A description of Lincoln in these debates has come down to us. He was six feet four inches tall, lean and ungainly in figure, thin through the chest and slightly stooping. In speaking he was at first very awkward and it seemed a real labour to adjust himself to his surroundings. His voice at the beginning was shrill, piping and unpleasant ; and for a few moments he played the combination of awkwardness, sensitiveness and diffidence. He never sawed the air nor acted for stage effect. He was cool, considerate and reflective, and his style was clear, terse and compact. His clothes hung loosely on his great frame, in contrast to Douglas' elegant and



rounded figure. As he proceeded his voice grew richer and more mellow, his form expanded and his grey eyes glowed with inner fire. His long arms and great hands were frequently a cause of trouble until some impressive service from them was needed to enforce impassioned words. He used his head with great animation, but in quiet passages his pose was like that in St. Gaudens' statue.

In this setting was enacted a great drama with all the country looking on—Douglas, adroit, passionate, menacing, contemptuous, arrogant and, under pressure, insulting; and Lincoln, masterful, logical, accurate in statement, generous in temper, but relentless as fate.

Douglas moved through the State like a returning Roman conqueror. Special trains carried him and his army of followers from place to place. Vast crowds with brass bands greeted him at every station. Torch-light processions marched as his bodyguards. Enthusiasm, revelry and drink marked his triumphal progress.

Lincoln was a forlorn figure. He would accept no favours or financial help in the campaign, and travelled in common carriages or goods trains, often sleeping in little wayside stations and eating the simple food he could find in such obscure places.

We need not follow the long arguments in this tremendous duel. Each has enshrined his principle in a few phrases: "I don't care whether slavery is voted up or down, but as between a nigger or a crocodile," said Douglas, "I am for the nigger. As between a white man and a nigger I am for the white man."



Said Lincoln : " We will speak for freedom and against slavery as long as the Constitution of our country guarantees free speech, until everywhere in this broad land the sun shall shine and the wind shall blow and the rain shall fall on no man who goeth forth to unrequited toil."

When the votes were counted Lincoln was found to have received a large majority of the popular vote, but Douglas had a majority of eight in the Legislature which had power to elect him to the U.S. Senate. Thus once more Lincoln returned to private life, exhausted in body and burdened with debt, but crowned with a new dignity. His voice had filled the land. The fruit of his long years of meditation and study had come to maturity. He had sought diligently to find that inward idea of national life which makes it something more than a form of government ; that treasured spirit which binds men into a great family and inspires them with self-forgetting love. He had exalted his country in the eyes of all men as a chosen people to whom was committed a sacred trust, and as he spoke on these high themes the souls of his countrymen burned within them. So, in those three months, the old Lincoln passed away and a new prophet came into his own.

There was yet another episode at this time that deeply stirred the country and hastened the approaching crisis. Among the emigrants from New England into Kansas a few years before was a stern old Covenanter named John Brown, whose heart was filled with hatred of slavery. During the Border warfare he had fought savagely against

the ruffian raiders of the slave-holders and now, despairing of justice, he set out to defy the government and die a martyr to the cause of freedom. It was no hasty action of an enraged fanatic but a carefully prepared expedition into the heart of Virginia. With the aid of his stalwart sons he organized and armed a little band and, setting free the slaves on his way, seized the United States arsenal at Harper's Ferry. It was a mad and desperate act and could have but one result. His sons and followers fell about him in an unequal battle, he himself was taken, severely wounded, and paid the penalty of the law. To Lincoln and others of like mind this abortive attempt was the deed of a maniac. Nevertheless it enflamed the public imagination as an adventure of heroism and uttermost sacrifice; and, only a few months later, thousands of brave men marched to the same sacrificial altar, singing :

“ John Brown's body lies a-moulding in the grave.”

One more event crowded into those two stirring years of 1858-60. A group of well-known men who had followed the great debates in Illinois invited Lincoln to make a public address in the city of New York. Lincoln was quick to accept this unexpected opportunity, and on the night of February 27, 1860, appeared upon the platform of the great hall of the Cooper's Institute. The poet, William Cullen Bryant, was in the chair; around him were gathered the most distinguished leaders of metropolitan life; the hall was packed with people of culture and wealth. Ambassador Choate and

Major Putnam, the publisher, were present, brought by their fathers to witness a notable occasion. They have both described the scene. Lincoln was visibly perturbed and confessed as much to young Choate, who sat near, for it must be remembered that, unlike some self-made men, he was painfully sensitive of his defects in manner and education. When introduced he telescoped his huge frame upwards and squeaked out in a thin, nasal voice, "Mr. Cheerman." By one at least among his hearers he was at once assigned to political oblivion. He hesitated, grew confused, and it looked for a moment as if the great occasion would be lost. But discipline of years, joined to a courageous spirit, are not so easily conquered by fright. Choate speaks of the sudden physical change which swept over him through the mastery of the spirit. We have seen it before—the upright figure, the burning eyes, the deep, mellow voice and most of all the simple, moral earnestness of a man possessed of his message. For more than two hours he lifted an enraptured audience to his own high plane of thought, and in the language of his great models—limpid, suggestive and luminous—unrolled the splendid panorama of American destiny. He sat down in the hush of a great silence ; and then the storm broke. We know to-day that few speeches in history have exercised such far-reaching influence in human affairs. Henceforth Lincoln was marked for his high calling. He was the prophet of the new day, the interpreter of a nation's soul. Only yesterday an obscure debater upon the question of the hour ; to-day the hope of his country's future. His nomination for

the Presidency over the heads of distinguished party leaders like Seward and Chase was not accomplished without political skill and organization, but in the end he was carried into his exalted position upon the crest of an irresistible moral wave.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CRASH OF STORM

LINCOLN had now reached the pinnacle of American ambition. Seldom in the history of mankind has fortune wrought so sudden and dramatic a change in an individual career. By a single step he emerged from shadow into a dazzling light. A few years before he had said : " I have done nothing to make any human being remember that I have lived. To connect my name with events of my day and generation and to so impress myself upon them as to link my name to something that will redound to the interests of my fellow men, is all that I desire to live for." Yet even his inflamed ambition had never dreamed of such an elevation as this, nor held himself worthy of it.

Whatever his inward feelings were he gave no sign of elation. He received the notification committee from the Convention in his little house and regaled them with simple food and an abundance of cold water. In the campaign which followed he took no active part, though we may be sure that his alert mind was directing the course of events. On the evening of election day he received the returns alone, and when the victory was assured declined the jubilation prepared by his friends with the remark :



"I guess there's a little woman up the street who will want to hear the news." One would like to know not only what went on behind the closed doors of his home, but even more of those tremendous events which were taking place behind the locked and bolted gates of his mind. There is reason to believe that he fought—and won—a terrible battle. Into the hands of this man, whose sensitive nature and intense pride had been tortured all his life long, was put the power of a despot. Two traits were observable: one was a deep and growing sense of dependence upon a power above himself which he called the "Divine Being," the other was that he again buckled on the breast-plate of Humour, his one and sure defence in hours of darkness. He fell into the way of mumbling to himself the rather maudlin line:

"Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?"

as if he was constantly struggling to keep his poise and preserve a true perspective. But once an officious clergyman felt called upon to use the line to him in the way of admonition and was met by the sharp rejoinder: "Well, why should he?" Perhaps his own deepest feeling about himself is revealed in his farewell words to his friends in Springfield, as he was leaving them for ever. He said:

"My friends, no one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old

man. Here my children have been born and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

It may be well to recall at this point some of the qualities which he was to bring into play during the next four years. From our present point of view it is not too much to say that no living man was so perfectly equipped for that high and exacting office as was he. To a wellnigh unimaginable knowledge of man, and power to influence him, he joined that peculiar quality of self-reliance which comes to the few chosen spirits through long periods of loneliness and detachment from the confusing claims of life. His disciplined intelligence was of the creative order—implying rhythm, balance, proportion—and was not dissipated by a bewildering acquisition. His mind was self-supporting and arranged its subjects with order and in just perspective. He analysed every problem to its simplest fundamentals. He was peculiarly free from personal bias in intellectual as well as political relationships. He had also a certain simplicity of heart which delighted in primitive things—in artless humour, in poetic

sentiments, in easy good-fellowship. It was inevitable that such a nature—so graciously yielding, so kindly tolerant, so free from guile—should be misunderstood by those who thought they were playing a deeper game of politics. Indeed, the first impression he made upon the able men he gathered about him was of a rather flippant, garrulous, incompetent person who had not outgrown the atmosphere of the village store. His lack of experience in administrative work, his utter want of system and his incorrigible habit of reading selections from his favourite authors at Cabinet meetings helped to confirm the illusion. The masterful mind and the governing will came slowly into view behind the gentle and elusive manner. His firmness in hesitancy began to look like a mental disease, for he sought everyone's opinion and seemed unable to form one of his own. Self-important statesmen rushed to his help and poured advice upon him. He measured his height with them and told them amusing stories, listening attentively to all they had to say—but he bided his time. There was personal tragedy in those first days of great responsibility—the tragedy of an immense loneliness. He must hew out his path and tread it alone. There was first the stern sifting by which he was testing the men and measures with which he had to deal. These men knew little the injudicious exposure they were making of their innermost secrets to his tolerant eyes. They were the tools he had to work with, and like a skilled craftsman he must know the uses to which they could be put. He mystified men by his patience, by his waiting and by his great silences ;

but all the while that capacious mind was gathering together the disordered elements about him and reducing them to the great principles upon which his administration was to rest. To Lowell he appeared "a long-headed and long-purposed man who knows when he is ready."

Three weeks before his inauguration he left Springfield and journeyed slowly towards Washington, in order, he said, to see the people and be seen by them, confessing in one place that the ladies before him had the better of the bargain. It was in fact a wisely planned educational tour, for he was well aware that a great crisis was impending and that the North was ill prepared to meet it. In his many addresses he harked back again and again to the great principles upon which the constitution of his country was framed. On Washington's birthday, February 22, 1861, he spoke to the citizens of Philadelphia in Independence Hall, from the balcony of which the Declaration of Independence was first read. On that day his mind was brooding over the past and his words sound like inward musings :

"I have often pondered over the dangers which were incurred by the men who assembled here and framed and adopted that Declaration. I have pondered over the toils that were endured by the officers and soldiers of the army who achieved that independence. I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of separation of the colonies from the Motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of



Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men and that all should have an equal chance. This is the sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence."

In these few impromptu sentences he probed to the innermost heart of the American system. It had a great task to perform, a unique place to fill among the nations. But the performance of that task and the achievements of that place had a larger meaning than national greatness. In the preservation of the Union and in the triumph of the idea which bound the States together Lincoln saw, in that illuminating moment, a new hope for all mankind.

But the way was to prove long and dark and the business at hand was pressing. Already seven Southern States had seceded from the Union and had organized a new national government under the title of the "Confederate States of America." The doubtful States along the border between the North and South, and upon loyalty of which the safety of Washington depended, were wavering. Within the capital everything was in the utmost confusion. The outgoing administration had widely scattered the little national army of sixteen thousand men; munitions had been stored in Southern forts, already seized by the Confederacy, while the Navy was securely held within their ports. The threat of disunion had been no vain boast; it was supported by menacing power.



The South was aflame, swept by tempests of enthusiasm and united in a sacred cause. Every Southern heart glowed with the ardour of the new patriotism and steeled the "will to conquer." The old loyalty to the Union, which their fathers had established with such high hopes, died away. The "tyranny" of the North was to be destroyed; true liberty was to be established by the "chosen people."

The pathos of the "Lost Cause" is not yet dead. The right of the part to disengage itself from the whole—the right of the Sovereign State to live in its own way and to propagate its own institutions, even to dominate a less virile people—was, throughout the South, the accepted doctrine of Liberty. And above it all shone the glory of the Divine Will. God had ordained that the South should be the chosen instrument for upholding the truth, clearly revealed in many scriptural texts and stories, that the ownership of man by man was of His appointed order. In our day the mind is staggered by this strange devotion to a cause so utterly repugnant to our moral sense. Even now it is hard for us to believe in the close alliance of despotism and religion. It would seem that good faith, justice and liberty were the great inciters to loyalty and devotion; but the sad testimony of history is that absolutism has its shrines of worship and that its servants do deeds of infamy in the spirit of heroic sacrifice.

At the moment when Lincoln took the oath of office there was no such definiteness of purpose, and no such unity of spirit, among the people of the North

as prevailed throughout the Southern States. The North was torn by cross-currents of opinion and passion. The engrossed citizen deeply resented any interference with his personal pursuits. He had come to believe that freedom and opportunity were his by some inalienable right, and, while he hated slavery and loved the Union, he had not been taught the lesson of individual responsibility for the welfare of his country. Moreover, the North was not of one mind even upon the question of slavery. The Abolitionists had preached of its iniquity with passionate fervour, but they were quite lacking in national vision and had alienated those to whom the integrity of the Union was the first concern. Nor did the Abolitionists have complete possession of the moral field, for not a few of the more conservative Churches reflected the temper of their Southern brethren, and saw, in the institution of slavery, clear signs of the expressed will of God.

An illustration of this temper Lincoln met with two days before his inauguration, when a delegation of New York merchants and bankers waited upon him to plead for a conciliatory policy towards the slaveholders. "It is for you, Sir," began the chairman, "to say whether the nation shall be plunged into bankruptcy and whether the grass shall grow in the streets of our commercial cities." "If it depends upon me," replied Lincoln, "the grass will not grow anywhere except in the fields and meadows." "Then," exclaimed the merchant prince, whose statue now adorns the city street, "you must yield to the just demands of the South. You must leave her to control her own institutions. You will admit

slave States into the Union on the same conditions as free States. You will not go to war on account of slavery." This declaration was too much even for Lincoln's kindly spirit ; he replied in a stern voice : " If I ever come to the great office of the President of the United States I shall take an oath. I shall swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States, and that I will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. That is a great and solemn duty. The Constitution will be preserved and defended until it is enforced and obeyed in every part of every one of the United States. It must be so respected, obeyed, enforced and defended, let the grass grow where it may."

Two years later another delegation from the same city, representing, they claimed, hundreds of millions of dollars, waited upon the President and demanded a gunboat to protect their property. Lincoln replied that he did not know where the Naval vessels were just then, and that the credit of the government was at a very low ebb ; but, he added : " If I were worth half as much as you gentlemen are represented to be, and as badly frightened as you seem to be, I would build a gunboat and give it to the government."

With all his hatred of slavery, emancipation was not the vital question which confronted the new President. The preservation of the Union was the main business before him, and it is evidence of his curious lucidity of mind that he formulated the programme of his administration in the just order of importance. Deep and black as was the blot of

slavery upon the national shield, the first consuming interest had to be the maintenance of national unity.

It was true, as the New York merchants said, that the whole country waited anxiously for his inaugural address, and in it he clearly defined his purpose : " I therefore consider that, in view of the Constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken, and to the extent of my ability I shall take care, as the Constitution expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States. I trust this will not be regarded as a menace but only as a declared purpose of the Union that it constitutionally defend and maintain itself."

And then he added these touching words : " We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching over every battlefield and patriot's grave to every living heart and hearth-stone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of Union when again touched, as they surely will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The haunting beauty of this appeal—so grave and tender and sincere—fell on unheeding ears. A thousand voices filled the air, but loudest of all were the cheers for victory which intoxicated the young warriors of the South. They were a gallant company—these descendants, as they boasted, of the English Cavaliers. Brave they were—whatever the ancestry of so mixed a population—and proud of their skill in fire-arms and riding. They felt themselves to be a superior race before which the " shop-keepers " of the North would quail. All was glory and



enthusiasm, colour and movement, war without horrors, victory without suffering, liberty and slavery. Among these frenzied youths were some from States like Louisiana and Florida which had been bought and paid for with money from the Federal treasury ; there were hosts of the " poor whites " who had been cut off from every uplifting influence in life ; there were many immigrants from the North and beyond the seas. But the same spirit animated all—the same sense of destiny. Behind the army were the sinister figures of the political leaders, like Jefferson Davis and Judah P. Benjamin—daring, resourceful and unscrupulous men—to whom victory meant power and historic names, and towering above all was the noble figure of Robert E. Lee, upon whose loyal heart was laid the burden of a tragic decision.

While the clouds of war gathered low upon the horizon Lincoln held his steady course. He would not take up arms against his brothers but he would fulfil the duties of his office and protect the property of the government. He waited with forbearance and patience ; not his hand should strike the first blow. The attack upon Fort Sumter on April 12th, 1861, meant that the country was invaded and war declared.

Meanwhile the situation in the North was cause for deepest anxiety. Superior in numbers and in material resources it was wholly unprepared and had little familiarity with the weapons of warfare. Lincoln called for fifty thousand troops for a service of three months, but masses of men, without training or leadership, could not create an efficient



army. The people flocked to the banner in sure confidence that hostilities would cease in a few weeks. Every backwoods politician felt fully competent to conduct a campaign, and high military positions were recognized gifts for political activities. Lincoln was helpless. His army was largely composed of militiamen, or territorials, from the separate States, organized and equipped under the command of the governors, and slow to acknowledge any allegiance to him. He sought to supply the need of generalship by long night study upon books of warfare, but his search for a leader who had knowledge, energy and discretion is a harrowing story.

This would have been a forlorn beginning for the Administration of the most well-known and accomplished statesman ; but Lincoln arrived in Washington almost a stranger in political circles and quite unversed in the ways of governmental procedure. He had chosen his Cabinet advisers with the usual aim of securing party harmony, and among them were four rivals for the Presidency at the late Republican Convention. In those first terrible days, when the enemy was threatening the capital itself, these men seem to have been united only by a common feeling of contempt for the President, whom they regarded as a political accident. Each was busy in laying plans to control the government and so secure the coveted prize at the next election. Seward, the Secretary of State, even went so far as to address an audacious note to his chief, proposing a scheme of action and offering to take upon himself the responsibility of the administration. Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury, confined him-

self to secret plotting for the destruction of Lincoln. The President's rooms were crowded at all hours of the day with office seekers. Congress was mainly occupied in finding military or political places for innumerable aspirants.

It is clear that the moral wave had passed and left a dirty sediment of selfish ambition and greed to mark its path. More astonishing still was the extraordinary outburst of the disease of vanity, not among young enthusiasts but among experienced and distinguished statesmen and soldiers who convinced themselves that they alone could avert disaster to the country. Indiscreet biographers have preserved letters written by Seward, Chase and McClellan which otherwise would be unbelievable. Thus Seward writes to his wife: "I will try to save freedom and my country. It seems to me if I am absent only eight days, this Administration, the Congress and the District would fall into consternation and despair. I am the only hopeful, calm and conciliatory person here." . . . "Only the soothing words which I have spoken have saved us and carried us along thus far."

McClellan also drew his portrait for the admiration of his wife with such master strokes as these: "By some operation of magic I seem to have become the power of the land." . . . "Who would have thought when we were married that I should so soon be called upon to save my country." . . . "I would willingly take the dictatorship and agree to lay down my life when the country is saved. I alone am the salvation of the country."

These evidences of mental disorder, companioned

with the physical disorders which filled the land, suggest the stupendous task which confronted the new President. Hardly six weeks had passed before the storm of war broke with the capture of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbour by Southern troops. To this challenge there could be but one reply. The tragedy had begun. The leader of the Northern forces was a stout old general named Scott. Only fourteen years before he had won distinction in the war with Mexico but now was too heavy and lame to mount his horse, though mentally strong enough to appreciate the madness of opposing the better trained army of the South with a mob of ignorant and undisciplined men.

But both sections were determined upon the arbitrament of battle and the immediate ending of the struggle. There were really three theatres of warfare: one in the far west, another upon the Ohio river, called the Department of the Ohio; and the third the territory which lay between the two capitals, Richmond and Washington, where, for four years, the Army of Potomac operated. It was this last section that witnessed the opening of hostilities, near the little river of Bull Run, about twenty miles south of Washington. General Scott had laid his plans with the skill of an old soldier, and the opening attack of the Northern troops was bravely and successfully carried to its objective. But complete success depended upon retaining the Southern reinforcements at Harper's Ferry by a vigorous engagement upon them there. This the Northern commanding officer failed to do; and thus opened the long, sad chapter of official disobedience,

disloyalty and weakness which filled the next three years with heart-breaking tragedy. These reinforcements had arrived in time and crumpled up the right wing of the Northern forces. A confused, disorderly retreat followed and, had the enemy but known it, Washington was at their mercy. This was on July 21, 1861.

Mortifying as this unnecessary defeat was to the North it served as a bracing shock to the people. General Scott now realized that a serious struggle had begun and advocated large drafts of men from all the States and a four months' training course before active service. It chanced that 1861 saw no more fighting, but immediately after the battle of Bull Run the young McClellan was given the command of the Army of the Potomac. Four months later Scott retired and McClellan succeeded to the position of Commander-in-Chief. This young man now fills the centre of the picture and he is well worth looking at. At this time he was thirty-four years old, a brilliant, handsome, engaging man, to whom the door of the temple of fame stood invitingly open. He had passed through the great Army college of West Point with distinguished honours, had entered the engineer corps and had made a notable reputation in the Mexican War. Later a tempting business offer had drawn him into civilian life ; and now, four months after the first battle of the war, he filled the highest rank.

In that position he satisfied the eye and it is not strange that many enthusiasts saw in him another Napoleon. He loved the pageantry of war and cut a dashing figure as he swept along, surrounded by



his richly bedecked staff. He was, in the main, right in believing that the destiny of the nation was put into his hands. His business was to create an army and then to strike a swift and telling blow. But at this point he utterly broke down. He could not move off the parade ground. In October he had one hundred and forty-seven thousand men to oppose a Southern army of forty-seven thousand, but he was obsessed by fears of an overwhelming attack by superior numbers. He poured forth incessant complaints and demands for more men, more arms and more supplies. He grew secretive, insubordinate and insulting. On one occasion Lincoln, his chief and supporter, called late at night at his house in Washington during his absence and sat waiting for his return. At last McClellan came in and, passing the drawing-room door, saw the President sitting there. He went straight to his bedroom and sent down word to say that he was too tired to receive anyone at that late hour. Against the indignant protests of government and people Lincoln still retained the unruly young man. He said he would "hold General McClellan's stirrup for him if he will only win us victories," and he had a curious faith that "if he could once get McClellan started" he would achieve a notable success. However, he now took another tone, and in place of kindly suggestions and gentle chiding delivered peremptory official orders. McClellan's vanity had now become a madness, and in private letters he poured abuse upon the President, the government and his subordinate officers—"the imbeciles," "treacherous hounds" and "Washington, the sink



of iniquity." He wrote the President a long admonition upon his political duties, and to the Secretary of War's demand for action he replied : " If I save this country now I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or any other person in Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice this army."

Lincoln was now in the full tide of military activity. To his thousand other duties he had added a course of serious study in strategy, to which he gave the larger portion of each night, and during the first two years of the war he had a wider and clearer view of the situation than any general under him. His commands to McClellan grew more definite and positive, yet they were ignored or delayed. In a moment of exasperation Lincoln once burst out that " if something were not done the bottom would drop out of the whole affair. If McClellan did not want to use the Army he would like to borrow it, provided he could see how it could be made to do something."

At last a slow and hesitating movement was begun, but McClellan had not the temper of a fighter, and after gaining advantageous positions he again fell back to Harrison's Landing and began a new series of bitter complaints. Lee, who was now in command of the opposing forces, knew his man well and played skilfully upon his weaknesses. Disasters to the Northern army could not but follow ; and at last on November 5th, McClellan, under a cloud of disloyalty to the government, was relieved of his command and never again employed.

In this slight sketch of a famous character, about

whose career bitter controversy was long waged, we have drawn the larger picture of the first two years of Lincoln's administration, upon its military side. It is indeed a picture of Rembrandtesque shadows. That the nation should be unready for war, or that the search for commanders should be long and trying, is not strange, but that incompetence should be linked to so much selfishness, egotism and disloyalty is a sad commentary upon human nature. It is difficult to judge how far Lincoln was justified in retaining McClellan in command, but subsequent events proved that he was held in the strong grip of necessity. Up to now the North had not discovered a single general of the first rank, while the Southern forces were led by the incomparable Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Grant's sun was just appearing on the Western front, but his great associates, Sherman and Sheridan, were practically undiscovered. It was not until Grant's capture of Vicksburg and Meade's victory over Lee at Gettysburg, both of which events occurred July 4th, 1863, that the tide of battle began to turn.

The political situation was equally dark. We have seen that the first defeat at Bull Run stiffened the resolution of the North, but months of inaction, followed by a long series of disasters, produced a spirit of doubt and pessimism.

Perhaps a fair barometer of public feeling is shown in the course of Horace Greeley, the erratic and powerful editor of the "New York Tribune." The influence of this journal reached the remotest corners of the country, and through its columns Greeley manifested his peculiarly whimsical genius.

He was in turn a warm supporter of Lincoln, a violent advocate of the most sanguinary form of warfare, a protestor against bloodshed, a champion of immediate peace by surrender to the South, and a most bitter vilifier of Lincoln. Beneath his pose of a simple-minded rustic he sought to hide an overweening and restless ambition which well-nigh matched his enormous influence. Such a confederate might have been invaluable to the administration, but it was part of Greeley's waywardness that he could not recognize the authority of the President, or appreciate the tremendous difficulty of the task put upon the government. The "Tribune," therefore, became a channel for spreading distrust and dissatisfaction throughout the North. It was perpetually hectoring the President and making impossible demands upon him. At last it put forth the preposterous demand that he should resign his office or, failing to obey its bidding, should be impeached as an incompetent.

Like the others, Greeley was diseased with vanity, but his attitude was not so extreme as it sounds to our ears. War was a disturbance in the business world and many Northern merchants resented the dislocation of trade. Innumerable plots were formed to disrupt the North. The Mayor of New York, a professional politician named Fernando Wood, conceived the brilliant idea of seceding and founding a City-State. Conscription in that city was attended with serious riots. An attempt was made to release and arm the many thousand Confederates imprisoned in the country, and it is sad to be told

that a distinguished English soldier was deeply implicated in that plot.

It would have been a comfort and support to Lincoln if he could have turned to his Cabinet in these hours of distress and bewilderment, but in his closest association he was met with the same disease of vanity, disloyalty and intrigue. There were true men among them, and after the first outbreak Seward had become his loyal and devoted friend, but on the whole, and while the fate of free government hung suspended, it was Lincoln's lot to fight the powerful enemy at the gate with forces rent by suspicion, jealousy and mistrust. He learnt a new and terrible truth, that :

“ He who surpasses or subdues mankind  
Must look down on the hate of those below.”

Few public men are so intimately known to the people whom they serve as was Lincoln to the people of the North. That was because he was accessible to all, and after his death innumerable pictures were drawn of his daily life in the White House. These pictures are not by any means always flattering. It is evident that the President was not at all times an imposing figure in that stately mansion. Perhaps the constant struggle against pride led him to the extreme of unconventionality, and dull persons could not understand his elusive and whimsical manner. Once the son of a distinguished foreign nobleman came in while the President was momentarily absorbed in writing. Without looking up, the Chief Magistrate of a great nation called out : “ Take a chair.” The astonished visitor



exclaimed : " I am Lord ——, son of the Duke of ——" " Take two chairs," flashed back the unperturbed writer.

Jest and story were Lincoln's defences by which he kept the intrusive visitor at a distance ; but wit is a dangerous weapon and doubtless Lincoln had himself to blame for much of the first misapprehension of his nature. His one absurd and rather undignified vanity was to be the tallest man in any company, and he immediately challenged any possible rival for the honour. One of these proved to have a fraction of an inch more height and the President, really piqued, exclaimed : " Well, your feet must be very cold way down there." The matter of legs seems to have had a considerable part in general conversation, perhaps because his own were so much in the foreground. Those of Douglas were disproportionately short. One day Lincoln came into the Cabinet room while some of the members were discussing the right proportions, and appealed to Lincoln for his opinion as to the proper length of legs to the body. " I should think," said Lincoln, " that a man's legs should be long enough to reach from the body to the ground."

At this time the stories he had heard in early life came trooping back to him and saved him from ever-threatening attacks of melancholy, as well as defending him from the importunities of hordes of advisers.

He was in his office at eight o'clock in the morning, and until ten o'clock was comparatively free to attend to the enormous business of the day. In place of the great staff which now surrounds the



President he had two or three young private secretaries and none of the present mechanical helps for the dispatch of work. At ten the doors were opened and the floods of advisers, applicants and petitioners swept in. It was his principle to see everyone and listen to their errands. "They don't want very much and they get very little," he once said in excusing himself. "Each one considers his business of great importance and I must gratify them. I know how I would feel if I were in their place." Another time, in utter weariness, he burst out: "I wish George Washington or some other old patriot were here to take my place for a while, so I could have a little rest." As the war situation grew more desperate and office seekers more persistent he said he was like "a man who was so busy letting rooms at one end of his house that he had no time to put out a fire that was destroying the other end." About that time he had an attack of varioloid and said to an usher: "Tell all the office seekers to come and see me, for now I have something that I *can* give them."

Mrs. Lincoln's efforts were directed to dragging him away from these people for a hasty luncheon, but when she was away the servants followed him about with plates of such simple food as he would eat. At the best of times he ate little and slept but a few hours. It was late at night before he was released and free to devote his mind to intense study of his war books. One of the young secretaries was John Hay, later the distinguished diplomat, statesman and writer, whose biography tells of how his Chief would creep along the passages to his room

in the early morning hours, and, sitting on his bedside, with his long legs dangling below the scanty night-robe of that day, would read aloud to him the last discovery of beauty or humour that had just cheered his solitary night watch.

Lord Charnwood, in his delightful biography of Lincoln, has copied a passage out of Artemus Ward which is worth repeating as a revelation of the kind of humour in which Lincoln and his equally artless companions delighted. Jefferson Davis, having confiscated the author's show when visiting the South, had been explaining his position and is thus answered :

“ Even now,” said Davis, “ we have many frens in the North.” “ J. Davis,” is the reply, “ there's your grate mistaik. Many of us was your sincere frends, and thought certin parties amung us was fussin' about you and meddlin' with your consarns intirely too much. But, J. Davis, the minit you fire a gun at the piece of dry goods called the Star-Spangled Banner, the North gits up and rises en massy, in defence of that banner. Not agin you as individooals—not agin the South even—but to save the flag. We should indeed be weak in the knees, unsound in the hart, milk-white in the liver, and soft in the hed, if we stood quietly by and saw this glorus Govymtent smashed to pieces, either by a furrin or a intestine foe. The gentle-harted mother hates to take her naughty child across her knee, but she knows it is her dooty to do it. So we shall hate to whip the naughty South, but we must do it if you don't make back tracks at onct, and we shall wallup you out of your boots.”

In a thousand such trifling incidents we catch glimpses of the freshness and eagerness of Lincoln's mind and discover the secret by which he was supported under the strain of an intolerable burden. Nothing could destroy his boyish delight or his undying enthusiasm in the wonderful unexplored world of human thought and achievement. If he was not learned like Gladstone, or clever like Disraeli, or intense like Mazzini, he possessed, like his great contemporaries, an unbounded mental vitality and an inextinguishable curiosity about men and affairs.

In this time of public disaster and gloom there came to him the greatest personal sorrow of his whole life. Of the four Lincoln boys one had died in early childhood. Robert, the eldest, had just entered Harvard University, and the two youngest, Willie and Tad, aged eight and ten, were the libertines of the White House. Like the Roosevelt boys of a later generation, they ran amok through all the rules and conventions of the Executive Mansion, making friends of ambassadors and policemen, organizing minstrel shows, bursting into Cabinet meetings and keeping the whole household in uproar. The memory of these two little boys is still dear to Americans. But in February, 1862, Willie sickened and died. The stricken father said little, and went about his business as usual, but his wife knew that a great change had come over him. He was even more gentle and kindly, and his thoughts turned more than ever towards religion, but it was part of his fine reserve to inflict his burden upon no other man.

During the four years of war there was little gaiety in Washington, and the President's entertainments never went beyond the necessary diplomatic receptions and banquets, which were conducted with the usual dignity and decorum. Lincoln had no taste for wine and never smoked, but it was not true of his administration, as was said of another, that "water flowed like champagne." It cannot be too often repeated of this Democratic leader that he was not a reformer of other people. He had many a hard battle with his own wayward nature, but he was singularly tolerant of others, and throughout his life kept aloof from every movement which tyrannized over personal liberty.

He was one of the few Presidents who really enjoyed great public receptions, when thousands of people flooded by him for the honour of shaking his hand. He liked to watch the types and was constantly diverted by the struggles of some stranger to make little self-important speeches as they were hurried by. One night an old man from New York State managed to say :—"Up our way we believe in God and Abraham Lincoln." "My friend," said the President, as he shot him along, "you are more than half right." Another man from the Farther West assured him that he had made a wonderful invention "A gun," he said, "ought not to rekyle ; if it rekyles at all, it ought to rekyle forrid."

Thus he lived during those two dark years. In the fuller story the gloom is shot through and through with flashes of wit and the bright play of humour. There may be a smile upon the lips of the

reader, but tears are near the surface. It was so gloriously brave and sad—this lonely fight against tremendous odds. It is well to look closely at the man St. Gaudens had portrayed—at the firm, solid poise upon his large feet ; the rising figure, gaunt and strong ; and the crowning head, noble in its rugged plainness and bent forward as if bearing up a great weight. It stands, as he always stood, just within and just without the passing stream of life, and looking down upon it with eyes of infinite compassion. Most truly it is the figure of a man who was born to be one of the burden-bearers of history.

“ Through such souls alone  
God, stooping, shows sufficient of His light  
For men in the dark to rise by.”



## CHAPTER VII

### INTERNATIONAL COMPLICATIONS

IT is not within the scope of this book to follow the details of the Civil War, but we cannot make even the slightest sketch of these two eventful years without a reference to the difficulties under which Lincoln laboured in his relations with countries beyond the seas.

Hardly had the country lawyer become settled in the Presidential chair when he was confronted by problems of international relationships for which his past experience had furnished no preparation. The real causes of the Civil War were obscure to most of the peoples across the seas. Even in America the national tie was held by many as an indefinite and elastic bond which made no great demand upon the spirit of loyalty. When, therefore, a portion of the Confederation chose to break that tie and form another, based upon common interest and sentiment, it must have seemed to many uninstructed minds a sane and reasonable course. Moreover, the war caused an immense dislocation of the cotton industry in England and great privation among the operatives in Lancashire. Intercourse between Europe and America was not common in those days and the basic principles of

friendly relationships not yet established. The sympathy of the higher classes in England was almost entirely with the South, although slavery was not generally held in approval. The North, as Lord Salisbury cynically remarked, had already become one of England's keen rivals in trade, whereas the Southern States furnished her with an essential staple of industry.

Besides, the cause of the North in the first two years of warfare looked hopeless, and intervention seemed to many a merciful act. The Confederate Government was appealing to all Europe for recognition and trusting to the friendly feeling of England for succour in its distress, caused by an ever vigilant blockade. Gladstone, in particular, voiced the feeling that the duty of England was to intervene, claiming that by secession a new nation was created. "Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army," he said, "they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made—what is more than either—they have made a nation." Louis Napoleon, the evil genius of so many enterprises, was the arch-intriguer on behalf of the South, and the English Government was not unmoved by his appeals.

On the other side Seward, the Foreign Secretary, was in a high state of excitement and demanded that war should be declared against England and France without delay. Lincoln dryly observed that "he thought the United States Government had about as much war on its hands as it could take care of"; but he sent a peremptory order to the American minister in London to refuse to hold any

conversation with Her Majesty's ministers on the subject of peace.

The situation became acute when two Southern emissaries—Mason and Slidell—were taken by a Northern Naval captain from the British steamer *Trent*. These men were bearing enemy despatches, and acting on behalf of the Confederate Government. The proper procedure would have been to seize the ship and bring it before a Prize Court in the nearest port. The Northern officer, however, had taken the men and let the ship go her way. He thus committed a breach of International Law, and Lincoln was quick to see that such action was indefensible. This wise interpretation of the crisis was met by instant opposition from the entire country, from the Secretary of the Navy, and the United States Congress. Lincoln then hesitated and suggested a Court of Arbitration, but eventually, with the agreement of his Cabinet, returned to his first position and surrendered the men with a suitable apology.

Later still the two Governments approached a breaking point over the unfortunate episode of the Confederate cruiser *Alabama*. This boat, which wrought incalculable damage upon Northern shipping, was built in English yards, partly manned by English sailors, and started upon her destructive course from the English coast. Such an act was a direct violation of neutrality and aroused the utmost indignation throughout the North. The British Government was quick to explain that the escape was due to the neglect of a minor official, and proper acknowledgments were made. Thus the danger

point was passed, but it proved an important factor in deciding Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation ; for he well knew that no civilized nation could wage war in defence of slavery.

The result of these unhappy events was that the South felt she had been deceived and betrayed in the hour of necessity, and the North that she had fought a terrible war for liberty and righteousness without the sympathy and support of the Motherland. These sentiments have persisted through all the changes of over half a century ; nor have they yet entirely lost their bitterness.

With Lincoln it was quite otherwise. The long-sustained mental habit of looking at every problem through other eyes than his own, gave him, despite his inexperience, something like an international mind. Upon the question of intervention he was firm and positive ; but he clearly understood the difficulties in which neutral nations were involved through the war. The cotton famine in England brought great hardships to masses of people by the dislocation of the industries of the North. He found, therefore, a peculiar satisfaction in the generous attitude of the Manchester working men, who had welcomed the Emancipation Proclamation by addressing a note of approval to him. In his reply, Lincoln took the opportunity for enlightening the mind of England upon the attitude of his Administration towards the internal and foreign problems of the hour. He explains that it is his chief aim to " maintain and preserve at once the constitution and the integrity of the Federal Republic," and, recognizing that the duty of self-preservation

must rest solely with the American people, he "fully realized that the favour or disfavour of foreign nations might have a material influence in enlarging or prolonging the struggle." He declares his confidence that "if justice and good faith should be practised by the United States, they would encounter no hostile influence on the part of Great Britain."

And then he adds these wise and inspiring words, which warm our hearts in this present day: "It is now a pleasant duty to acknowledge the demonstration you have given of your desire that a spirit of amity and peace towards this country may prevail in the councils of your Queen, who is respected and esteemed in your own country only more than she is by the kindred nation which has its home on this side of the Atlantic. I know, and deeply deplore, the sufferings which the working men at Manchester, and in all Europe, are called upon to endure in this crisis. It has been often and studiously represented that the attempt to overthrow this Government, which was built upon the foundation of human right, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of human slavery, was likely to obtain the favour of Europe. . . . I hail this interchange of sentiment, therefore, as an augury that whatever else may happen, whatever misfortune may befall your country or my own, the peace and friendship which now exist between the two nations will be, as it shall be my desire to make them, perpetual."

This message was written on January 19, 1863. More than two years later, on that fateful day of his



death, the same kindly spirit found expression in a note of welcome to the new British minister, Sir F. Bruce. These words, which seem to come to us from his grave, are a sacred legacy of good will upon earth. They contain his last message to the world he was about to leave. He wrote :—" Sir Frederick Bruce,—Sir, the cordial and friendly sentiments which you have expressed on the part of Her Britannic Majesty gave me great pleasure. Great Britain and the United States, by the extended and varied forms of commerce between them, the contiguity of positions of their possessions and the similarity of their language and laws, are drawn into constant and intimate intercourse at the same time. They are from the same causes exposed to frequent occasions of misunderstanding, only to be averted by mutual forbearance. So eagerly are the people of the two countries engaged throughout almost the whole world in the pursuit of similar commercial enterprises, accompanied by natural rivalries and jealousies, that at first sight it would almost seem that the two Governments must be enemies, or at best cold and calculating friends. So devoted are the two nations throughout all their domain, and even in their most remote territorial and colonial possessions, to the principles of civil rights and constitutional liberty, that on the other hand the superficial observer might erroneously count upon a continued consent of action and sympathy, amounting to an alliance between them. Each is charged with the development of the progress and liberty of a considerable portion of the human race. Each in its sphere is subject to difficulties and trials not

participated in by the other. The interest of civilization and humanity require that the two should be friends."

These words were written fifty-six years ago, and they explain why Lincoln, being dead, yet speaketh.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BREAKING CLOUDS

THE opening of the year 1863 found the fortunes of the Union at their lowest ebb. The question as to whether America had a nationality worth saving was not yet answered. Many a dark doubt must have disturbed the mind of the President. The nation had for him no value apart from the idea that gave it worth. That idea was the equal right of all men before the law. But such a conception of national purpose had not as yet taken hold of the national conscience. America, as the "land of opportunity," had been too long the popular teaching of all political schools. Masses of the people—untaught and undisciplined in Nationalism—were weary of a devastating war which they but partly understood. The first thrill of excitement had passed, and doubt and restlessness, after many disasters, were undermining the people's resolution. Even wise and brave men longed for peace. The surrender of a principle and compromise with right seemed small matters compared with the terrible desolation of death and destruction. Lincoln had many enemies who, from every fresh disaster, drew bitter lessons of his incompetency in office. The cry was "Peace, peace, when there was no peace."

In the darkest hours Lincoln knew there could be no surrender. To capitulate one iota of principle was to destroy the spiritual basis of the Union. Upon him must rest the burden of steadfastness and determination. Terrible as was the suffering of war to his gentle spirit there could be no end, he well knew, but in absolute victory. The way to peace was the way of sacrifice. It was this conviction that gave him fortitude, sustained resolution, and enduring patience.

But the year which opened so darkly was destined to see a turn in the tide of events, and to witness many important happenings. On the first day of the year Lincoln, exercising his function as Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, brought into effect a proclamation signed three months earlier, declaring that "All persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforth, and for ever free." This famous "Emancipation Proclamation" has become an event of immense historic importance, but it was put forth primarily as an instrument of political necessity. Lincoln, who had long meditated and worked upon it, was perhaps himself surprised at its far-reaching results. He had hoped for a more equitable way of freeing the enslaved race, and had alienated many friends and supporters by his firm determination to await the time when his action would receive the full support of the North. Until then he had fought the war on the issue of Union, and upon that issue four slave States were ranged upon the side of the North. His own programme

for emancipation included a generous compensation to slave-holders; and to the very end he had far-reaching plans for relieving the sufferings of the South. But the tide of events called for drastic action, and the issuing of the Proclamation at that precise moment gave a new stimulus to the war. It gave a concrete moral motive to the struggle that was in accord with the advanced moral sentiment of mankind. Over the North a wave of enthusiasm spread. It was a notable victory for the Lancashire workmen who had chosen to see their factories shut down for lack of cotton and to face a long winter of cold and hunger, rather than prosper by acknowledging the justice of slavery. Incidentally, it added 180,000 devoted coloured troops to the Northern forces, whose services helped not a little to turn the scale of battle. It cleared the air of much confusion of mind at home and saved the Union from danger of all foreign intervention.

Another important event was the steady rise of Grant, through many stages, into the position of supreme command. The career of Grant is one of the most striking romances of the Civil War. It is true that he has received scant recognition from English writers and that his genius has been quite overshadowed here by the fame of Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Even so just and sympathetic an interpreter as Lord Charnwood has not pictured the man as those in the North knew him.

A graduate of West Point and a successful subaltern in the Mexican War, he had retired from the Army and lived the purposeless and shiftless life of one who had no place in the general scheme of



things. At the outbreak of hostilities, a disappointed and broken man of thirty-nine, he had applied for a commission from the governor of his State, and met with a contemptuous refusal. Undaunted by this rebuff, he succeeded in raising an independent regiment of volunteers which soon compelled recognition by its high standard of discipline and training. He was then commissioned in the State Militia and later transferred to the United States Army.

From the beginning he seems to have been distinguished by a clear grasp of the problems set him and by promptitude of action. His field of activity was with the Army about the Ohio River, and he was brought into public notice by his skilful capture of the important Confederate forts, Henry and Donelson. On July 4, 1863, his earlier successes were crowned by the surrender of Vicksburg, which gave the Unionists complete control of the Mississippi River. Despite his many successes and few failures, Grant had not commended himself to his official superiors, but when, after the sifting of three years of stern warfare, his genius for leadership triumphed over all opposition, Lincoln saw in him the object of his long search—a general whose mind was set upon the one task of carrying on the war, who was free from political entanglements, whose mind could devise and compass a comprehensive plan of campaign, and whose will for victory could not be weakened by adversities. He was a silent, aloof man, wholly self-sufficient, asking for neither help nor advice, given to days of solitary brooding over his problems and to quick

and incisive action. Compared with the magnificent Lee he made a sorry figure in his careless, undress uniform, but in the greatest moment in a soldier's career he showed a thoughtfulness and magnanimity which only Lee could match. For a single year of the war he filled the high position of Commander-in-Chief of all the Armies and gladdened the heart of Lincoln by his loyal devotion.

The elder Trevelyan, in his fine volume upon Charles James Fox and his period, has paid a noble tribute to Grant by a quotation from the American, Forbes. "He had two great qualities, unity and steadiness of purpose, and (best of all) great magnanimity to those under him. Confident of himself, he seemed to have no jealousies or petty faults, and he sought to get the very best men for his subordinate commanders and to award them all possible credit, instead of grasping it for himself."

Grant possessed other qualities which endeared him to Lincoln, such as modesty, self-restraint and an uncomplaining spirit ; but the one all-important trait of his nature was a simple-minded devotion to the task entrusted to him. His business was to fight and not to intrigue, but so fearful had real soldiers become of politicians that even Sherman, who loved Grant whole-heartedly, urged him to decline a position that brought him within the influence of Washington. Hardly had Grant established his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac when he was visited by a delegation of Lincoln's enemies with an offer of the Republican nomination for the Presidency. The reply was one of the few outbursts of passion into which Grant

was ever known to have been betrayed. Thus these two great-hearted men, linked together by devotion to a common cause and by a mutual trust, conspired and planned and fought for the salvation of their country.

Altogether the most important military event of this year, apart from the fall of Vicksburg, was Lee's bold adventure into Northern territory. Success would have justified so desperate an act and have highly imperilled the Union cause. At the same time Vicksburg was falling under Grant's pressure, Lee came into contact with the Federal forces, under General Meade, near the town of Gettysburg, in the State of Pennsylvania. Here was fought one of the most sanguinary and decisive battles of the Civil War, which, after three days, resulted in the retreat of the Confederate Army. As usual, and in spite of Lincoln's persistent urging, the Northern general failed to follow up his advantage; but these two important victories were the first clear signs of a turning tide.

Four months later this battle was made for ever memorable by the utterance of Lincoln at the dedication of the graves of the fallen into a National Cemetery. It was a great occasion. An impressive oration was delivered by Edward Everett, the most distinguished American orator of the day. Lincoln had been asked to say a few words and had made a careful outline of his thoughts on bits of paper. He seems to have made no deep impression upon his hearers, and the applause of the moment was given to the stately oration of Everett. Even John Hay, with his fine literary taste, was untouched, and it

was not until the words were seen in print that their immortal beauty sunk into the heart of the world.

“ Je ne crois pas que l'éloquence moderne ait jamais rien produit de plus élevé que le discours prononcé par lui sur la tombe des soldats morts à Gettysburg,” was the judgment of a distinguished French writer.

These are his words :—“ Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived or so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow, this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far beyond our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here ; but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause, for which they gave the last full measure of devotion ; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not



have died in vain ; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Many bitter days were to follow, and bloody battles, but under Grant's steady pressure the end became inevitable. The slow organization of the democratic forces began to bear fruit. The Union Armies had grown strong in numbers and discipline. The leaders who survived the gruelling test of actual warfare had become experienced warriors. In Sherman and Sheridan, Grant had two lieutenants of the first rank with whom he associated on closest terms of confidence and trust. The unity of the Higher Command formed one of the happiest episodes in the last months of Lincoln's life, and doubtless it was peculiarly gratifying to him because it was the result of the democratic selection upon which his whole philosophy of government was founded. Grant feared Washington and seldom appeared there, but Lincoln often slipped away for a few hours with his beloved Army. He shared Grant's love for horses, and was a skilled rider, which put him on equal terms with experienced cavalry men. Now that he had found a general more knowing than himself he never interfered in Army matters nor even offered suggestions. The Presidential office of Commander-in-Chief fell largely into abeyance, and he exercised his authority solely to smooth the path of those in whom his trust was placed. In every way, except in gallantry and devotion, the Northern Army was growing superior to the Army of the South. It was a more highly organized machine,



better supplied with the materials of warfare, more skilfully led, and far better clothed and fed. If Lee had the advantage of fighting on interior lines, Grant had at his disposal the abundance of the North to draw upon. The momentum of a great war does not easily die down, but long before the end Lee saw the approaching disaster. He would have saved the country from further suffering had not the arrogant spirit of Jefferson Davis dominated the councils. By every human calculation Lincoln's mighty effort to save the Union was now crowned with success. Moreover, it was Union purified from the poisonous growth which was strangling its soul. The moral victory was won and every day brought the physical triumph nearer.

At this moment a strange wave of perversion swept over the North. When democracy had proved its power and the ideal upon which the nation was founded had been justified, Lincoln's faith in the people was put to its severest test. For the moment, all these significant facts were forgotten and a fever of war-weariness spread like an epidemic. The psychology of these public moods was not then understood, but it was clearly a physical and moral reaction. The overstrain of tense emotion is a natural phenomenon, and the longing for a normal life of peace, domesticity and happiness rises at times to an irresistible impulse. The disconcerting fact that must be faced is that the despotic mind, as represented in Jefferson Davis, remains unwaveringly firm and resolute. It keeps the goal in sight and suffers gladly the hardships which beset the path to it. The unyielding

temper which is ready to risk all and endure all is of the essence of autocracy.

As we have seen, the North was never wholly united nor did it ever give itself whole-heartedly to the business of the war. The country was of many minds and easily played upon by self-seeking politicians, by peace lovers and enemy intriguers. The cry went up that the war was a failure and the Administration incompetent. Lincoln's term was drawing to its close, and the wild confusion of party conventions and a general election added to the widespread uncertainty. Amid the tumult another voice was heard, raucous with hatred towards the South and calling for blood revenge. Altogether it was a fertile soil to receive the planted seeds of discord. There is no vagary of mind with which we are familiar to-day that was not shouted into the air of that unhappy country. A man called Vallandigham, a citizen of Ohio, a prototype of the agitator and traitor who rises to the surface in times of unrest, was the leading spirit of the democratic convention which adopted a resolution that "this Convention does explicitly declare, as the sense of the American people, that after four years of failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war . . . JUSTICE, HUMANITY, LIBERTY, and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities," and nominated the deposed general, McClellan, for the Presidency. To such uses were these great words put. Lincoln replied, "We accepted this war; we did not begin it. We accepted it for an object, and when that object is achieved the war will end, and I hope to

God that it will never end until that object is accomplished."

In the midst of all that welter of intrigue and disloyalty, of weakness and chicanery, it is pleasant to remember the perfect trust which existed between Lincoln and the Commander of the Armies. Grant had not thought it worth while to repeat to the President the incident during which he made his vigorous reply concerning his nomination for the Presidency, and Lincoln, on his part, knew exactly what his Commander's attitude would be. "If he takes Richmond, let him take the Presidency," he said, meaning that if he took the Confederate capital and ended the war all else mattered little. But danger to the cause of the Union lay not only in the machinations of peacemongers and in the disloyalty of the opposition party. It was a widespread spirit of distrust and weariness among all classes. At best it was a moment of acute anxiety, for the election of McClellan meant that all the sacrifices to save the Union had been made in vain. Through those wearying weeks Lincoln aged visibly, but the faith of his soul was unshaken. He would listen to no suggestion of peace on any other terms than unconditional surrender of the Southern Armies, nor would he treat with the Confederacy except on the basis of a rebellion against the lawful Government. He held more firmly than ever that his country, as a whole, North and South, was dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Lincoln was a shrewd and skilled political leader, but he entirely misjudged the strength of the

reactionary movement. His re-election to the Presidency was by an overwhelming popular vote, and by a vote of 212 to 21 in the Electoral College. It was an amazing demonstration of the mental and moral resources which are developed among the people under a system of free government. Lincoln's contribution to the campaign had been the remark that it was "bad policy to swap horses when crossing a stream," and he had rested his case upon the accomplishments of his administration. Therein his judgment was unerring, for the silence of a strong man is sometimes more eloquent than speech. It was likewise an assurance of the stability of a democratic society that an exciting election could pass off without disturbance in the midst of a civil war. All in all, the election was a test of the capacity of self-rule among the people of the North and a triumphant vindication of Lincoln's faith. His spirit must have taken a great leap upward as he looked back over the four stormy years of his administration and onward into the coming years of peace and reconstruction.

Plans for the rebuilding of the shattered national unity were filling his mind during the last year of his life. Deeply as he hated the institution of slavery, he had only feelings of affection for the people of the South. A nature so rich in human sentiment could not have remained indifferent in the presence of that tragedy of disappointed hopes. For the war had been something more than a trial of power. It was a struggle of two ideals of civilization. Those deep, sad eyes of Lincoln saw more than lay within his horizon. He saw the desolation of a beautiful



and fertile land ; the splendid, patriarchal estates laid bare ; the broken ties, which once had bound master and slave in most intimate and loving relationship ; the poverty, distress and suffering of those gracious and gently-bred people. And then he felt for the hurt pride—the pride which had blinded the eyes and hardened the hearts, but which had also inspired many a knightly deed, and for the saddened hearts of those to whom the “Cause” —for ever lost now—had once seemed divinely fair. No susceptible person who has lived in the South can be unmindful of that hour of defeat. It is the land of melody and of sentiment, with great lonely spaces and woods of infinite sadness, of tender beauty of earth and sky and sea, of a civilization which has passed away. Something better has come, but the “Lost Cause” still appeals to the imagination.

All this Lincoln saw and felt. He had no exultation of triumph and no thought of revenge. Even in those darkest hours of doubt and uncertainty about his personal future his mind was busily planning how he could best soften the blow that must inevitably fall upon those who were still his enemies. To the very end of his life he hoped the Government would compensate the slave-holders for their losses. He would restore each State to its place in the Union, not only by re-establishing it as a legal entity, but by welcoming it back into the fellowship of the family. No humiliation was to overtake any individual or community, but amnesty was to mean the stretching out of a helping hand. His cherished aim was to allay bitterness, to conquer



hatred by love, to restore the erring, to set up those who were cast down, and to re-establish a purified nation. By faith he had seen a re-united people. He would make it a reality.

In all these plans for the exercise of the great power bestowed upon him, Grant was his faithful ally; and it was given to Grant to make the first practical demonstration of this strange spirit of conquest. The terrible Battles of the Wilderness and the great encircling movement of Sheridan had struck a death blow to the Confederate Armies. Ragged, starving, and entrapped, these brave men had reached the limit of endurance. It was then that Lee asked for a conference with Grant at Appomattox, and Grant, dishevelled and mud-bespattered, without sword or distinction of rank, had hastened hither. Lee, stately and reserved, dressed in a handsome new uniform, wearing a magnificent presentation sword, and surrounded by his Staff, came into the room. It was an historic occasion, but it opened like a gathering of old fellow-students and comrades in arms. At last Lee asked for terms of surrender. Grant had been impressed by the sword, which, by the etiquette of war, would soon be put into his hand. A way of saving his distinguished foe from humiliation flashed into his mind and he wrote as the first stipulation that *all* Confederate officers should retain their side-arms. Lee, "knowing his man," explained that the horses in his Army were privately owned. Grant immediately stipulated that they should not be surrendered by their owners, because, he added, "they would be needed for the spring planting." Already he

had seen the famished condition of the Southern soldiers, and had given orders that the commissariat stores should be opened to supply all their needs. He even exceeded his authority by including in his written terms a general pardon to all rebel officers. The Southern capital witnessed no triumphal entry. Instead, the leader of the Northern forces had hurried away to place his boy in school.

Richmond, however, was not to be denied a triumphal entry. Lincoln had been stopping for some days at the Army Headquarters in order to be in close touch with Grant. When the city was evacuated by the Confederate Government, but while it was still the capital of an undefeated foe, Lincoln suddenly appeared in Richmond with almost no escort. He landed from his steamer near Libby Prison and, picking up a negro guide, began to saunter through the streets, hand in hand with his little son, Tad. As soon as his presence was known, the coloured population gathered about him with cries of exultation. They pressed about him, trying to touch his clothes, and calling down blessings upon "Massa Abram." He was surrounded by foes, but not a hand was raised against him. He even had interviews with the one remaining member of the old Government. His ignorance of the sensation of fear had always been a cause of anxiety to the officials and now an escort of sailors was sent by the terrified Admiral Porter, but Lincoln, quite unperturbed, returned to his boat and steamed for Washington, where, a few hours later, he was to meet with death.

That evening on the boat was long remembered

by the happy company who were with him. It was a two days' trip, and Lincoln's heart was filled with joy and gratitude for the approaching end of the war. Someone suggested that Jefferson Davis deserved to be hanged, and the President replied with great seriousness: "Judge not, that ye be not judged," and, taking a little, worn copy of Macbeth from his pocket he read slowly and twice over:—

"Duncan is in his grave.  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well ;  
Treason has done his worst ; nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing  
Can touch him further."

## CHAPTER IX

### PEACE

THIS remarkable scene took place about five weeks after Lincoln's second inauguration. Into these weeks had crowded the triumphs, the glories and the satisfactions of a lifetime. When Lincoln stood for the second time upon the portico of the capital and looked down upon an ocean of upturned faces, he had reached the apex of human greatness within a democratic society. Out of the chaos which confronted him when last he stood upon that spot, and took the solemn oath of office, he had wrought a highly organized and wide-spreading system of government, whose every part, fitly joined together, worked harmoniously towards a single end. The most terrible civil war in history was drawing to a successful close. The Cabinet, Congress, the Army and the whole country looked up to their unchallenged leader with reverence and love. All the world looked on, wonderingly and admiringly, and acclaimed the power and dignity of this gentle despot. And upon Lincoln himself the four years of suffering and toil had worked mighty changes. He had passed through a purifying fire and come forth cleansed. The easy manner in which he had assumed almost autocratic power,

and the naturalness with which he exercised it, will always remain one of the marvels of history. But not less strange is it that as power increased and fame mounted higher and success surrounded him with a mantle of glory his spirit grew studiously the more humble and his attitude towards life the more devout.

If he had any feelings of personal exultation on the morning of March 4, 1865, no sign of it escaped his lips. Yet it was an exulting moment—the moment when the full tides of a great soul and a great occasion met. The words he spoke will never be forgotten while the spirit of democracy endures. They rise and swell until they burst into a pæan of love over which ten thousand times ten thousand tears have been shed. Only the opening and closing passages can be given here :—

“ On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war ; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive ; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came. . . . Both (parties) read the same Bible and pray to the same God ; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any man should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces ;



but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. ‘Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!’ . . .

“Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it shall continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid with another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, ‘The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’

“With malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.”

These last official words are his legacy to mankind. Immortal dreamer of a world of love; prophet and teacher of the brotherhood of man! Already that tireless brain was scheming to heal the wounds of war, to relieve the distress of poverty, to compensate the enemy for his terrible losses. He who had been the inexorable champion of righteous war

in the blackest days of the struggle, was no less the inexorable champion of righteous peace ; for in the victory of a good cause both victor and vanquished triumph.

Through all the harrowing years of war, years of bitter endurance and self-renunciation, Lincoln had been seeking an answer to his great question : " Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people or too weak to maintain its own existence."

And now, after many days, he had found the answer, and the question again arises in one of his last speeches. He saw that Democracy is not an achievement. It is an aspiration and a struggle. He had learned the important lesson that self-government is of all forms of collective life the most difficult and precarious. It is the ideal towards which the whole creation moves, but the way is beset with dragons. America, broken and bleeding from many wounds, must gird herself for a long journey. How could the broken parts be re-united and the wounds healed—that was the problem which occupied the mind of Lincoln in his last hours. The established principles of a lifetime would be his guide ; the bond of unity would be drawn in the spirit of justice, mercy and goodwill. There could be no place for vengeance nor humiliation in that reconstructed Union. The strong must help the weak in the name of a common brotherhood. The problems of reconstruction had not yet taken concrete form, and the vexed question of negro enfranchisement had not yet arisen. Lincoln knew that race differences were fundamental antagonisms,

and he had cherished hopes that that greater mass of negroes would migrate and set up a self-respecting and self-governing State in Africa. His busy mind was for ever sifting the claims of each new plan that suggested itself for restoring a Union of common interest and sympathy, and of rehabilitating the devastated country of the South.

But it was not to be. While the joy-bells of the new peace were still ringing, Lincoln, who, on their afternoon drive, had been picturing to his wife the calm and happy future which awaited them after his term of office was over, sought his favourite relaxation at the theatre on the evening of April 14, 1865. He sat with Mrs. Lincoln in the Presidential box greatly enjoying the English play, "Our American Cousin." With characteristic democratic shiftlessness the door of the box was left for a moment unguarded, and in that moment a dissipated, half-crazed actor, John Wilkes Booth, crept up behind him unobserved and shot him through the head. He was removed to a near-by house and at 7.22 on the morning of April 15th "a look of unspeakable peace came over his worn features" as he slipped out of life. As Stanton observed the end he closed the sightless eyes and quietly said, "Now he belongs to the ages." The cowardly act of Booth was the crowning perfidy of the autocratic spirit, communicated to a perverse and lawless nature. He regarded himself as a romantic hero and looked for popular applause. He was not alone, but had been given a leading part in a conspiracy which was to avenge the South for its sufferings. The South did not applaud the murder of

its greatest friend. Even Jefferson Davis regarded the act as bad policy. But it has remained for our generation to discover that such acts of infamy are not the isolated results of disordered brains, but are the natural fruit of a system which exalts the "Will to conquer" above every restraint of honour, truth and justice.

Once more the body of Lincoln passed over the route he had taken four years before on the way to his inauguration. Slowly the train of mourning moved through the sorrowing masses which lined every foot of the way. A nation's grief is a terrible sight, but looking back this appears to us like a triumphant progress. The Lincoln of brain and heart and soul passed by in regal state. Those unhidden tears were symbols of a people's love and devotion. Over those burdened hearts brooded the strong and tender spirit of the dead. This lover of men, this prophet of righteousness, this deliverer of the bondsman, this friend of his enemy, had come into his own. At last, after what agonizing struggles, what bitter sufferings, what herculean toil, he was enthroned in the heart of a worshipping nation, forever.

His tired body was laid in a grave not far from the little home in Springfield, and over it was raised a mighty pile to bear witness of a nation's reverence. But the soul of this wondrous man was not buried. It lives in the buoyancy and strength of everlasting youth, more and more drawing men into fellowship with itself.

Not only the bronzed figure, but the spirit of this man, has returned to the land whence long ago his

ancestors set forth to seek a new life within a distant colony. He has come home, crowned now with the honour and reverence of mankind, to be one of many witnesses that the finest spirit of English civilization, the passion for liberty and just dealing, shall not perish from the earth.

In those crowded days of war, when the President dragged his tired body through the hospital wards, bringing the cheer of his presence to thousands of sick and wounded, he used to meet a fellow-worker there whose heart was like his own. And when the end came and the shadow fell upon those wards, Walt Whitman, out of his bursting heart, sang the nation's grief :—

“ O Captain ! my Captain ! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought  
is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and  
daring.

But O heart ! heart ! heart !  
O the bleeding drops of red,  
Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.

“ O Captain ! my Captain ! rise up and hear the bells ;  
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle  
trills,  
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the  
shores a-crowding  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces  
turning.

Here Captain ! dear father !  
This arm beneath your head !  
It is some dream that on the deck  
You've fallen cold and dead.



“ My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse, no will,  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object  
won ;  
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed  
and done.

Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells !  
But I with mournful tread  
Walk the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.”

## CHAPTER X

### IMPRESSIONS

THE death of Lincoln plunged the country into the deepest gloom, through which no single ray of light penetrated. The greater, and by far the richer, part of his work was left unfinished. Years of desolation followed, and the high vision his eyes had beheld of a family of States re-united in the bonds of a common sorrow and common destiny seemed like the figment of a disordered imagination. Not one of all the men who had achieved greatness in war was equal to the demands of peace. He had been the supreme leader among them, the directing mind, the inspiring force. And this wondrous thing—this delicate and harmonious mechanism of mind and spirit, of vision and power, was swept out of existence by the theatrical gesture of a vulgar egoist. The impish fate which had mocked at Lincoln throughout life had reserved its deadliest stroke for the moment of purest happiness he had ever known. Great as he had become, a greater future awaited him. Martyrdom was not for him the crown of life, which, from the beginning, had been an unfulfilled aspiration, but a cruel mockery. Such a career is more than a tragedy ; it is satire.

In the feverish years that immediately followed the war Lincoln was a tender sentiment—and afterwards a legend—but not a leader in American life. Many books were written about him, many orations and poems eulogized him, many statues and memorials were raised to him, but the palace of his dreams was left unfinished. When, in the dark hours of disaster, the hearts of others failed them, he had fought sternly on ; but he fought for peace and for an ennobled nationhood. Only a great soul could know that victory, after such a war, cried out for magnanimity, helpfulness and love towards the fallen. The perplexing problems of reconstruction could be solved only by the large wisdom and patience of a Lincoln ;—and America has produced but one. It was Lincoln's destiny to fight the South, but he could never have humiliated the people.

To-day we have a better understanding of this leader of men. An angel has rolled back the stone from his tomb and his spirit walks the earth. In some measure he has resumed his former leadership, for, in the confusion of our times, an anxious world has turned to him for guidance. He left no philosophy of democratic government, but his career was a series of milestones along the democratic way. He lived principles which are wonderfully illuminating of the conditions under which liberty and restraint abide together in a free society. Thus, to his mind, democratic government was as far removed from individual anarchy as it was from majority tyranny. It was power bestowed by the people to be exercised for the public welfare. No

wavering of the popular will could alter the terms of the commission under which it served. The conflict of many minds and wills must enlighten, but not weaken, the united co-operation of the people. Free government did not mean freedom from authority or restraint, but freedom of choice in ruler and policy. The duty of obedience and service of the individual to the State was the first requisite of a robust liberty. This liberty is not an inalienable right; it is the fruit of struggle and sacrifice.

These were some of the principles which guided Lincoln in his official life; but they were not the commonly accepted ideas of democracy in the American Republic of that period. His own philosophy of government had not been learnt at the village store, and in the end he acquired great power, not because he followed the popular mind, but because he instructed and dominated it.

#### DEMOCRACY AND TRUTH

In any survey of Lincoln's career the puzzled imagination is met, at every step, by the apparent contradictions of a dual nature. Even in the White House he lived close to the people—an eager and receptive learner of their understanding or wisdom. From the beginning he had gone to school to them. His nature seemed to rest upon a simple faith in their integrity and good judgment as a mass. If he had "ideals" they were firmly based upon what was realizable in practical life. His long experience had made him intimately aware of the selfishness

and the untrustworthiness of human nature, yet he betrayed no trace of bitterness or cynicism. He kept to the end a childlike trust in the common man, with whom most of his life had been spent. Moreover, he had always been an ambitious political worker and a local party leader. The men with whom he lived and worked, whatever fine sentiments they might utter upon platforms, believed that popular rule was a system of bargainings, combinations, adjustments and concessions by which the immediate goal was most quickly reached.

Lincoln was as "practical" as any of his political associates, and far shrewder than most of them; yet his real life took its source in a quite different world. The mind strays back to the story of the accidental training of his early boyhood, and of the fixed impressions that must have been made upon his nature by its saturation in the literature of the Bible. We are always conscious of something not revealed—of a court of conscience where passing events were tried by an absolute standard.

We have noted his scrupulous fairness towards opposing counsels in court cases. We read earlier of his walking many miles through the dark night to rectify a trifling overcharge in payment for goods, and we know of his assuming the whole financial burden of his partner after the failure of his one commercial venture.

This delicate sensitiveness to truth—this perfect honesty in the discussion of public questions and the conduct of public business—is perhaps his greatest contribution to the problem of democracy. The genius of autocracy is secretiveness and intrigue,



for its authority rests not upon the enlightened co-operation of the people, but upon their submission and obedience ; while democracy follows every deception with terrible vengeance. Lincoln was never tired of suggesting that the principle of honesty belonged not only to the realm of moral conduct but that, in the business of the practical world, it was the only strong and lasting policy among a free people. His aim, as a powerful, democratic ruler, was to throw open the shutters of every secret chamber and flood it with the noon-day light. He had been entrusted with grave responsibilities by his fellow citizens. He would trust them fully in return. He would hide nothing. Diplomacy he sought to make an open game, played before all the world, as true sportsmen contest in the arena. Policy, once formed, he sought to state in language so clear and simple that the humblest might understand. He held it to be beneath his dignity to confuse the public mind by vague rhetoric which expressed incomprehensible ideas. There could be no place for deception, intrigue or cunning in the affairs of a people who were themselves responsible for the national well-being. He knew that the weakness of democracy is that it is only half democratic, whereas absolutism is wholly absolute. For three painful years the people of the North had to bear the shocks of repeated disasters. There was no attempt to hide the truth nor to mitigate the pain. Weariness and faltering overtook them, but the inexorable law of democracy is that no member of the body is absolved from the common burden. And, in the end, a new and

more closely-knit nation was born, purified by suffering and enriched by heroic memories.

Some day it will be remembered that this nation of many races, religions and tongues was made one by the exercise of the principles that Lincoln taught and practised. It was made one by the love of liberty, justice and truth, and in the dear memory of its martyred leader.

#### SPIRIT OF GOOD WILL

There was yet another trait in Lincoln's nature which added immensely to his effectiveness as a democratic ruler. Perhaps it was really a group of traits which made him singularly tolerant and kindly in his judgments of men and parties. Whatever this quality, or group of qualities, was, it was far removed from the lazy indifference towards moral standards that is often misnamed "good nature." We know him to have been a man of convictions, of strong will, of high ideals, and of righteous anger. He made stern demands upon himself, but he could be marvellously forgiving and patient with the foibles of other men. He practised the rules of Puritanism with the heart of a Cavalier. Personally and mentally, he was always putting himself in the other man's place and exercising a sort of "exploring affinity" with that other man's temptations and weaknesses. Yet he was infallible in his discernment between the real and the false—guided by a subconscious instinct towards the realities of life. His overpowering sense of humour, which often seemed

to detract from the dignity of his office, was an expression of the sensitiveness of his nature towards the right relation of things. We have seen how he put on humour, like a suit of armour, as a protection against the intrusions of self-important men, or against the blows of overwhelming disasters. But we should miss its deeper meaning if we did not picture a strong man struggling—like Laocoon against the strangling coils of fate—to keep the firm and delicate poise of his mind and the sweetness of kindly, human sentiment in his heart.

We have spoken of Lincoln as a "great gentleman," but such a term hardly fits the accepted definition. Of social training he had none, and, if he had received ever so much, that great, loosely-jointed figure would not have fitted into any frame of convention. His long legs sprawled over floor or chair or table in grotesque manner. His roughly chiselled head, with its deep-lined, sallow face and riotous black hair, conformed to no type. His habits were as peculiar as his appearance. He ate little, and in odd times and places. He was fastidiously neat and his clothes befitted his station, but he wore them with the awkwardness of the backwoodsman. Yet in spite of this poor outward show he was a most gallant gentleman—fearless, gentle, unmindful of self and infinitely considerate of others. Moreover, a modest estimate of himself did not betray the dignity of his high office. He was "Father Abraham" of the popular marching song to all suffering and grateful people, but he was also the supreme and authoritative head of his administration.

All this suggests that his just and kindly relations towards the world flowed from quite a different source than a happy nature. These relations were a reflection of the principles by which his life was governed. He knew that the bedrock of any democratic society is Good Will ; that unity of aim and sentiment are the result of mutual understanding and sympathy ; that pride and arrogance have no place in the social or official life of a nation "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Ill-nature is essentially a destructive and dividing force. It is an assumption of right which no member of a democracy can claim. It is uncivilized and belongs to the jungle rather than to an ordered community. Free civilization is based upon widespread Good Will among all classes ; and the great leader of a democracy is he who is most practised in the exercise of this virtue. With despotism the whole scene shifts. Such a government is upheld by a different kind of authority and is directed towards another goal. Exclusiveness, pride and arrogance may be good instruments of oppression, but they are fatal hindrances to the stability of a Republic.

Lincoln's modesty was partly the gift of nature and experience, but to the end of his days he never relaxed the stern discipline by which he held the mastery over every tendency to pride and self-will. The future history of mankind will be dominated by one of two principles of personal and official conduct, and if the story of Lincoln teaches anything, it is that the nation that is founded upon the basis of Good Will shall not perish from the earth.



## LINCOLN'S RELIGION

No picture of Lincoln would be truly drawn which left out the part religion played in his history. As the strain and responsibility of office increased a spirit of dependence upon Almighty power grew with his growing mastery over the elements which played about him. In a technical sense Lincoln was not a Christian by the standards of the religious world of his age or ours. His logical mind could not accept all the doctrines held essential by the Evangelical Churches. A thread of religious mysticism, however, ran through his nature—even a tendency to superstition—fed by unremitting study of the Bible and by the constant practice of prayer and worship. To the end of his days it was his habit to kneel beside his bed, like a little child, and pray for guidance and strength. His constant aim was less to have God on his side than to be quite sure that he was on the side of God. "Let us have faith that right makes might," he said, "and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we see it."

All his life long he had never thought too highly of himself, but in his days of power he achieved the fine flower of a noble humility. Religion furnished him with the conviction that his trials and sufferings were essential conditions for the work God had entrusted to him. The most unconventional of men, he was the most punctilious in the observance of the dignities of life. He was neither a critic nor fanatic concerning the habits of the men about him. It chanced that he neither smoked nor drank, but



he wished he could find the brand of Grant's whisky in order to send the same to his other generals.

In later life he became a regular attendant at Church services, without accepting the tenets of any denomination, and placed a high value upon the religious observance of Sunday. His humour was said to have been Elizabethan, but he showed an officer to the door and administered a stinging rebuke for using profane language in his presence. His heart was steeped in poetry and his mind was ever searching for the great realities. Whatever form his religion took, it was of a robust order. "I know that there is a God and that He hates injustice and slavery." Naturally he was the prey of Evangelical ministers. They flocked to him with the last message from God and must sometimes have sorely tried his patience. On one occasion when a body of ministers had asked for immunity for a traitor, on the ground of his religious profession, Lincoln burst out: "In my opinion the religion that sets men to fight against the Government because they think the Government doesn't sufficiently help some men to eat their bread in the sweat of other men's faces is not the sort of religion upon which men can get to Heaven."

It is clear that Lincoln's faith was based less upon special revelations than upon a larger view of moral integrity which brought man into personal relationship with God. As he put forth no pretensions to personal insight or wisdom of his own so he disregarded the pretensions of others which did not square with his faith in a righteous law. To another clerical deputation which came to instruct

him upon his duty he replied : " I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal His will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed that He would reveal it directly to me ; for, unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter ; and if I can learn what it is I will do it. . . . I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be wise and right. Why, the rebel soldiers are praying with a great deal more earnestness, I fear, than our own troops, and expecting God to favour their side. . . . Whatever appears God's will I will do."

This note of personal responsibility is never absent from his speeches during the trying period of war. Not even Providence could relieve him of that burden. He was put into a commanding place, not to do his own will, not to be the servant of the people's will, but to follow, step by step, the path of enlightenment and duty. Such was his understanding of democratic leadership. To him the integrity of a nation dedicated to justice and liberty was of supreme moral concern. He saw in it the hope of unborn generations throughout the world. " The spirit of our institutions," he said, " is to promote the elevation of men. I am, therefore, hostile to anything which tends to their debasement."

## LABOUR

The labour problem had not yet reached an acute stage in that land of superabundance, but Lincoln seems to have foreseen the inevitable conflict which must arise between the two mighty forces. He faced that question in the same religious temper of justice and kindness. He had known the grinding toil of the poor; his great, gnarled hands were those of a common labourer. He thought of labour as prior and superior to capital and deserving of the higher consideration. "The strongest bond of human sympathy," he said, "outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people of all nations, tongues and kindreds." But his large mind was fixed upon an harmonious and helpful co-operation of all classes for mutual benefit, and he adds, "Nor should this lead to a war upon property or the owners of property. Property is the fruit of labour; property is desirable; is a positive good in the world." . . . "Let him not who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him labour diligently and build one for himself, thus by example ensuring that his shall be safe from violence when built."

If religious faith is the surrender of the individual will to the guiding Will which makes for righteousness in human history; if it is to follow the light of reason and inspiration over whatever path it leads and through whatever tangles of struggle and sacrifice; if it is to long passionately that the spirit of justice, truth and kindness shall prevail among men, in some unattached way, Lincoln must be

reckoned among the spiritual leaders of his generation and his name written in that glorious record of men who lived by faith.

## THE UNKNOWN ELEMENT

There still remains in any estimate we make of Lincoln a mysterious hinterland into which we cannot penetrate. Elements of strength or weakness leap to the eye in the story of his life, but the sources from which his power flowed are hidden in some unexplored region of his soul. He was distinctly the product of democratic selection, and his whole nature is redolent of the soil from which he sprang. He belonged to Springfield, Illinois, in its earliest and crudest days, and not to New York or London or Paris. Had he lived he would, with great content, have returned to Springfield and his little wooden house, and have been found again among his old associates at the village store. Dickens has pictured the appalling newness of that new Western country, which, for fifty years, was Lincoln's home. But the impression which this remarkable man made upon his contemporaries and upon history, is that of a nature which has gathered the richness and flavour of the ages. He stepped from a life of semi-obscurity into the blinding glare of world-publicity without a thought of self. He put on power like a familiar robe. With all his love of the dramatic form in literature he was singularly undramatic in nature. He faced individuals and Governments with the same fearless simplicity and with an utter disregard of effect. Balzac says that "Calvin, like

all bourgeois who rise to moral sovereignty, or like all originators of social systems, was consumed with jealousy," but the French dramatist did not know the wealth of human feeling engendered under a democratic system. Lincoln's mind was far too busy and his heart too full to leave room for any kind of destructive feelings. Unlike many men, his development was not arrested in mid-life but rather grew in curiosity and eagerness. The last sight his eyes rested upon in this world was the stage of a theatre. It was always like that. Great as was the part he was called upon to play upon the world's stage, he remained essentially a spectator, filled with delight and appreciation of the skill of others. He was a plain and simple gentleman who, amid the many struggles and distractions of a short life, had, day after day, found time to feed his mind and soul upon the stored treasures of the past. And so, though the generation that knew him still lingers upon the earth, the rugged outlines of his figure are even now softened in an atmosphere of other-worldliness.



## CHAPTER XI

### WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN

**I**N the short history of the American Republic two figures rise before the eyes of the world like twin mountain peaks. Already the mists of legend have gathered about their tops. The careers of these two giants were strikingly unlike, yet each in his time embodied the genius of America. Only ten years separated the death of the one from the birth of the other, yet they live on different social and economic planets. Each was a leader in a war of freedom. One created and the other saved a nation. The names of both stir the deepest emotions of reverence and gratitude in the hearts of their countrymen, yet both suffered intolerable wrongs from their contemporaries. They were despised and hated of men, but their places are secure in the world's Valhalla.

The fame of Washington stands out like a bold cliff—sharp, distinct and rugged. Even his sonorous name befits him. His figure was majestic, like his mind. In the harmonious balance of qualities he was Nature's masterpiece—a finished work. He is never elusive, but stands four-square before the world. His feet rested solidly upon the earth;

his head, as pictured in Copley's unfinished portrait, is a model of strength and calm.

Washington was born poor, but highly placed. There was little opportunity for schooling in the rural Virginia of his youth, but he early learned the hard lessons of fatigue and danger in the wilderness. From the first days of manhood he was a brave and resourceful fighter; his knowledge of soldiery was gained through practical experience and the habits of self-reliance and resoluteness were fixed in early age. He was born to leadership, and his position marked him for a public life. By inheritance and marriage he became the richest American of his time, and the noble mansion of Mount Vernon, with its wide-spreading estates, was a fitting background for his distinguished career. His heart was ever in his home. He loved the business of a planter, and his name was honoured in the world's market-places. In his home he surrounded himself with all the refinements and elegances of the day. The furniture, plate, horses, carriages were befitting his station. It was an open house, whither pilgrims from all countries consorted and met an hospitable welcome. The reserves and dignities of polite social intercourse were never forgotten in that stately company.

In such surroundings Washington breathed his native air. Courtly, dignified and commanding, he was Nature's king. His tall, athletic figure was hewn from a solid block and tempered by the hardships of war and wilderness. Authority sat upon his brow and his broad shoulders carried the weight of a nation struggling into life. So royal

was his person that some wished, and many believed, that the sceptre of sovereignty would be placed in his capable hands.

Yet he was no friend of Monarchy. He loved liberty with all the strong passions of his nature. For seven desperate years he struggled almost alone against the forces of a great Empire and the incapacities of the Continental Congress, to establish liberty upon the American continent. He performed the impossible. Hunger, cold, wet, defeat, treachery and weariness battered in vain against his resolute will. He pledged his life and all his great possessions to the cause which excited only the passion of cupidity among many of his countrymen. His fluctuating armies fought without proper supplies of munitions, food or clothing, while Congress wrangled and the Colonies haggled over the price of freedom. In those dark hours he fought with pen no less valiantly than with sword. The tortures of Valley Forge fell upon commander and soldiers in like degree, and in the comradeship of suffering, mutual love, and respect, bound all ranks together. His labours were prodigious and borne without complaint. Hardship and anxiety he accepted with unruffled calm. His terrible wrath overcame him only in the presence of treachery or indifference.

Far away upon the banks of the sleeping Potomac lay the broad fields of the home he loved and for which his heart ever yearned. An exile by the decree of Duty, he gave without stint the energies of his entire manhood to the service of his fellow men.

The policy of Washington's administration was

not less fully exposed than were all the elements of his personal character. It was definite, consistent and businesslike. He accepted the office of President with great reluctance and at the behest of the whole country. He had no genius for political manœuvres and deprecated the party system which came into being during his second term. His one aim was national solidarity ; his one early foe was sectional jealousy. He neither sought nor shunned popular approval, but aimed at the accomplishment of practical good for the country as a whole. In manner, dress and surroundings he bore little resemblance to the popular notion of a democratic ruler. His manner was frank, but reserved and dignified. His costly clothes revealed the estimate he placed upon his office, and about him were all the evidences of a gentleman of taste and wealth. He would accept no salary, but was punctilious in demanding full payment for all expenses. His soldierly figure, strong and poised, proclaimed that he held himself to be the first citizen of the land and worthy of all respect.

The first article of his creed was that America should for ever free herself from all European alliances. He knew, as few of his generation did, the boundless resources of the Western land, and he rightly judged that every energy of the new nation should be devoted to development and expansion. To this end he was deeply interested in opening communications between the East and West and in fostering a varied and interdependent industrial life. He gave the full weight of approval to Hamilton's financial programme, recognizing that a nation

is as strong as its credit. He encouraged education and the establishment of seats of learning that the young might grow up in the atmosphere of American institutions. Of his aims he wrote :—

“ My policy has been and will continue to be while I have the honour to remain in the administration, to maintain friendly relations with, but to be independent of, all the nations of the earth ; to supply the wants and be carriers for them all ; to share in the broils of none, to fulfil our own engagements, being thoroughly convinced that it is our policy and interest to do so. Nothing short of self-respect and that justice which is essential to a national character ought to involve us in war.”

There can be no mistaking these words. He speaks for nationalism, for a strong and prosperous Union, for a vigorous prosecution of the business at hand. In his touching farewell address he appealed to the people to follow this course and to forget all antagonism in a common cause. But even before he passed into private life the country was divided upon the eternal problem of strong, centralized government and the peculiar rights of individuals and States.

Of this wise and masterful man it might be said that his character was chiselled in such rugged lines that to-day the whole world sees its majesty and does homage to it.

In the sixty-four years which separated the administrations of Washington and Lincoln the seeds of discord planted in American soil by the



Constitutional compromises had grown into a mighty tree which overshadowed the whole land. Lincoln was heir not only to the tragic consequences of compromise but to the spirit which had animated Washington and his associates. To Lincoln the Union was a sacred trust and he lived in near kinship with those who had won its freedom.

But the curious contrast between these two defenders of the Confederation was not more marked in their outward conditions than in the quality of their endowments. The fanciful suggestion of names might discover in the liquid sound of Lincoln a hint of a certain softness of nature which marked his whole career.

His figure is never quite clear, and the outline wavers and becomes blurred. His mental photograph is taken out of focus. It is as though two streams of life flowed through him, one open to all men, dancing in the sunlight and showing distinctly on the landscape of history, the other gleaming for a moment and then, like a shy child, hiding itself in the maternal earth. It is elusive, half hidden, appearing and disappearing in sunlight and shadow. Washington's thoughts were never hard to follow. They were clear, purposeful, practical. Lincoln brooded, in his secret soul, over the insoluble problems of life and a veil of mysticism half concealed his meaning. The strength of Washington was like bare granite. He was not wanting in tenderness, but he hung Major André without a qualm. The rock in Lincoln's nature was covered with soft verdure, and the quality of mercy would have been strained to save the gallant English boy.

So staunch a warrior as Sherman found the spirit of mercifulness the dominating trait of Lincoln's character. It was ever noted that his eyes were wells of sorrow. He could endure pain, but not inflict it.

These two men were alike in the great qualities—in personal fearlessness, in transparent honesty, in disregard of self-interest and in a certain proud humility. They reached the same goal from the two extremes of democratic life. Orderliness, dignity, reserve and authority distinguished every action of Washington. Not one of these qualities did Lincoln possess. His were the qualities of inwardness—of the soul nurtured in solitude to love and adore.

Lincoln was the most quotable of Presidential writers. His words flow like hidden springs beneath the soil of his country. He reaches the imagination and feeling. Washington's messages and letters fill many volumes, and are a storehouse of information, but they play little part in the common life of the people.

Lincoln is always wise and comprehensive. Sometimes his words thrill us by their power and beauty. Yet apart from the Emancipation Proclamation, written to meet a military and political exigency, he has left no State papers of the first rank. It seems that he read his military books to some good purpose, but a spectator or critic of war can hardly be ranked as a soldier. Without doubt he held sound views upon national finance, but he could lay no claim to distinction, such as Hamilton's, in that department of government. His foreign

policy developed through hesitation and uncertainty into clearness and strength. It was something that he restrained the aberrations of Seward, but he could not justly be placed among the great Foreign Ministers. In no sense was he a Reformer. He abhorred the Abolitionists and, in spite of his Spartan habits, could not be won over to support the Prohibition movement. His horizon was wide, and he saw in the whole; but in no one direction, except in rare moments of eloquence, did he reach the highest place. He brought into the sterile political life of his day the elements of intense moral earnestness, of a marvellously clear perception of the eternal realities and of a haunting beauty of expression. Unlike Washington, he was a practical politician. That interest fitted his gregarious habits and his consuming curiosity about his fellow men. He passed through many filthy places and came forth wholly clean. No evil thing came near Washington without shrivelling up. Lincoln supped with publicans and sinners.

In business, where Washington's practical genius found full play, Lincoln, at first, was hesitating and unready. That early training, of which we have spoken, and the long years of mental solitude, infinitely enriched his nature, but furnished no experience for the administration of a Government. Not the least remarkable event in the history of his official life was the discovery of unsuspected powers and their quick adjustment to the needs of his station. He appeared to carry the burdens of office lightly, to have abounding leisure to meet the hordes of curious and importunate persons who thronged

the White House, and to find distraction from care in his love for books. He seemed to have no system, and pestered the heads of departments with requests or recommendations written on bits of cardboard. Yet somehow he gathered all the threads of administration into his own hands. The wheels whirled smoothly and a thousand shuttles ran swiftly in and out, creating a pattern under his skilful guidance. Meanwhile he wrote innumerable messages, speeches and letters. The unsolved mystery is when he slept.

Washington was great, and we stand in awe of him as before a colossal statue. We see the splendour and grandeur of it with our eyes. It is all before us, distinct and clear. Lincoln also was great, but we see him through a softening mist. There is some undiscovered power which eludes our search—some spiritual perfume which enthrals our senses. After our analysis the secret is still unrevealed. Unsuspected springs of energy or emotion appear and disappear, we know not whence.

The drawing of this picture of America's greatest leaders would not be quite true unless we marked clearly the limitations of outline. They are set within a frame which bounds the scene of their interests and activities. The youth of a nation, like that of man, is a time of schooling and of gathering forces. Both Washington and Lincoln knew that the soul of a nation has little worth apart from a strong and disciplined national body. It was the task of both to nourish and strengthen that body and to make it the efficient instrument of the spirit. America, they believed, possessed something that made it unlike other nations, but

which was destined to bring untold blessing to all the peoples of the earth. They believed also that the idea of American nationality could be cherished and developed only by independence and by isolation from the problems of Europe; only by making the Republic united and powerful. The limitation of their activities grew out of necessity—the first necessity of establishing a firm and lasting Government. In that period of American history their lots were cast. To their own generations they were beacons of light. Faithfulness to the problems of the age, devotion to the highest interests of their country, honour and unselfishness in public service, open and receptive minds to every new light—these are their contributions to the ages, these are the immortal guides into the unknown future.



## CHRONOLOGY

- 1765. Stamp Act passed.
- 1776. Declaration of Independence.
- 1783. American Independence recognized.
- 1787. Constitution framed.
  - North-west Territory ceded by States to National Congress and slavery excluded from it for ever.
- 1793. Cotton gin invented by Eli Whitney.
- 1799. Death of Washington.
- 1803. Purchase of Louisiana from France.
- 1808. Slave trade abolished by U.S.A.
- 1809. Abraham Lincoln born, February 12th.
- 1812-14. War with Great Britain.
- 1820. Missouri Compromise.
- 1823. Monroe Doctrine declared.
- 1834. Lincoln elected to Illinois Legislature.
- 1846-7. Mexican War.
- 1847-8. Lincoln in National Congress.
- 1854. Missouri Compromise repealed.
  - Republican Party formed.
- 1857. Dred Scott case.
- 1858. Border Ruffians in Kansas.
  - Lincoln-Douglas debate.
- 1859. John Brown's Raid.
- 1860. (November). Lincoln elected President.
  - (December). Secession carried in South Carolina.

1861. (February 4th). Southern Confederacy formed.  
(March 4th). Lincoln inaugurated.  
(April 12th to 14th). Bombardment of Fort Sumter.  
(April). War begins. Secession spreads. 75,000 men called for by proclamation. Massachusetts troops attacked in Baltimore. Trent case.  
(July 31st). First battle of Bull Run.  
McClellan made Commander-in-Chief.  
Slidell and Mason seized on the high sea.
1862. (February 6th). Fort Henry taken by Grant.  
(February 16th). Fort Donelson taken by Grant.  
(April 6th and 7th). Battle of Shiloh.  
(August). Second Battle of Bull Run.  
(September). Battle of Antietam.  
Emancipation Proclamation framed.  
(November). McClellan removed.  
(December 13th). Battles of Fredericksburg and Murfreesborough.
1863. (January 1st). Proclamation of Emancipation issued.  
(May 2nd and 3rd). Chancellorsville defeat.  
Stonewall Jackson killed.  
Food ship from New York for Lancashire operatives arrives at Liverpool.  
(July 4th). Battle of Gettysburg. Vicksburg falls.  
Draft riots in New York.  
Port Hudson taken.  
(September). Battle of Chickamauga.  
(November). Battles of Chattanooga, Look-out Mountain and Missionary Ridge.
1864. Heavy drafts for Northern Army.  
(March 2nd). Grant Commander-in-Chief.  
(May 5th and 6th). Battles of the Wilderness.  
Sherman begins his march to the sea.  
(June). Battle of Cold Harbour.  
Grant before Petersburg.  
(July). Sherman's victories in Atlanta.

- 1864. (August 13th). McClellan nominated for President by Democratic Convention.
- (September 19th). Sheridan's victory at Winchester.
- (November 8th). Lincoln re-elected President.
- (December 21st). Savannah occupied by Sherman.
- 1865. Slavery abolished in the United States.
- (January 15th). Fort Fisher falls.
- (February 2nd). Peace Conference between President Lincoln and Southern representatives.
- (February 18th). Charleston occupied by Union Forces.
- (April 1st). Battle of Five Forks.
- (April 3rd). Richmond and Petersburg occupied by U.S. Forces.
- (April 9th). Surrender of Lee with his whole army.
- (April 12th). Mobile taken.
- (April 14th, 15th). Assassination of President Lincoln.
- Attack on Seward.
- (April 15th). Andrew Johnson President.
- (April 26th). Johnston's surrender to Sherman.
- (May 10th). Jefferson Davis captured.
- (May 26th). Kirby Smith surrenders in Texas.
- End of the Rebellion.

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